

INTERVENTION -  
THE AMERICANS IN HAITI, 1915-1934

RICHARD LEE SCHREADLEY





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Intervention - The Americans in Haiti, 1915-1934

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

of the

Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

by

Richard Lee Schreadley

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy





### Vita

Richard Lee Schreadley was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on January 3, 1931. He was raised on a farm in central Pennsylvania and received an accelerated primary education in a one-room country school. He graduated from Lower Paxton Township High School in June, 1946. In 1948 he began undergraduate studies at Dickinson College, leaving there the following year to enlist in the Navy. In 1952 he returned to Dickinson and subsequently graduated, cum laude, in June, 1955, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature. On July 1, 1955, he was commissioned an Ensign in the Naval Reserve, and a year later returned to active duty in the Navy. In 1958 he was augmented into the Regular Navy and thereafter was promoted through the ranks, achieving the grade of Commander on July 1, 1969.

From 1967 through 1969 he attended, under Navy sponsorship, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, receiving the Master of Arts degree in 1968 and the Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy degree in 1969. In 1969 he was awarded a George Washington Honor Medal for a Letter-to-the-Editor, by the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. The following year he received the Navy Commendation Medal for his work in compiling a history of the naval war in Vietnam.





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### List of Published Writings

- Article, "Sea Lords," The United States Naval Institute  
Proceedings, August, 1970.  
Article, "Nothing to Report," The United States Naval  
Institute Proceedings, December, 1970.  
Article, "The Naval War in Vietnam," The Naval Review,  
1971.



## Abstract

On July 28, 1915, American marines and bluejackets from the armored cruiser Washington were landed in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, for the purpose of "preventing further rioting and for the protection of foreigners' lives and property and to preserve order." Thus began a military occupation of nearly twenty years duration. The events leading to the intervention, the extraordinary measures taken to conclude the treaty which "legalized" the occupation, the structure and operation of the treaty regime, and, finally, the sequent steps taken to effect withdrawal, are recounted in some detail in the pages that follow.

A chronological approach has been selected as the one most suitable for what is essentially historical narrative. Wherever possible descriptive passages are based upon eye witness or first hand accounts gleaned from the record. Archival material from the State and Navy Departments provided the principal sources used in preparation of this work. Other useful and informative sources examined included the Admiral William B. Caperton papers in the Library of Congress, and an unpublished manuscript by Captain Edward L. Beach, Sr., loaned to the





writer by Captain Edward L. Beach, Jr. A selected bibliography follows the text.

Both impressive and instructive are the roles played by extragovernmental individuals and groups in the shaping of American foreign policy as it pertained to Haiti. Missionaries, civil libertarians, businessmen, journalists, out-of-office politicians, bankers and philosophers, at home and abroad, all made their influence felt in, through, and sometimes over the head of the State Department. Prior to the intervention, Haiti most certainly ranked with later day Czechoslovakia, in that it was "a far away land of which we knew little." After the intervention, however, self-declared experts were suddenly everywhere, offering strident criticism and advice to those harassed officials who bore the responsibility for formulating and carrying out American policy in the Black Republic. Some of the criticism was undoubtedly warranted, and some of the advice was sound, but a distressingly large part of what was being said and written about Haiti during the intervention was gratuitous and not well founded on fact.

Haiti during the decade of the twenties became a political issue sans pareil, in part because of the American swing toward isolationism and a between-the-wars distrust of the military, but more particularly because of the racial issues involved. America was not yet prepared to grant its own large negro population an equal place in the sun, but neither was it in a mood to tolerate supposed white injustice





toward the blacks of Haiti. Yellow journalism flourished, and isolated instances of wrongdoing by the occupation forces were seized upon and presented as illustrating a general policy of repression and brutality enforced by "the bayonets and machine guns of American marines."

Needless to say, such charges found quick echoes in the radical press of Latin America and Europe, and even as far away as China. Haiti became a convenient stick with which to publicly thrash the United States.

Each successive American administration undoubtedly recognized the dissension at home and the damage to American prestige abroad caused by the continued occupation of Haiti. Withdrawal, however, posed serious questions of conscience and at least a threat that having failed to effect needed reforms, a second intervention might be required in the future. Responsible American officials were loath to recommend precipitate retreat in the face of explicit and violent opposition threats to the persons and property of those Haitians who had cooperated with the intervention. There appeared to be no honorable way out, and in the light of Haitian history since the withdrawal of the American occupation, one is tempted to conclude that there was in fact no exit without a clear admission of failure.

Writing in the fall of the year 1971, it is virtually impossible to resist the temptation to compare the American intervention in Haiti with the infinitely more costly and tragic American intervention in Vietnam. In neither country,



it now appears, was there a clearly defined American national interest at stake. In neither country were there significant American investments, nor large American resident populations. The strategic considerations often cited as reasons for the interventions were most probably defunct when the interventions occurred. The subject of Caribbean naval bases and coaling stations was virtually a dead issue by 1915 as a result of changes wrought by the Spanish American War and the then current cataclysm in Europe. The domino theory in Southeast Asia and the Dulles strategy of containment were largely discredited by 1965 in view of the breakup of monolithic communism and the new alignment of world powers. In both Haiti and Vietnam, high moral principles were invoked to justify intervention. America must save Haiti from the chaos and anarchy of its constant revolutions. America must ensure that the free people of Vietnam have the right to choose their own form of government. In both countries America has signally failed, as of this writing, to nurture the free democratic institutions it emplaned in those unhappy lands at such great and thankless expense.

Why? A frequently voiced complaint concerning both interventions was that America had simply "backed the wrong horses." Haitian and Vietnamese governments supported by the United States during the interventions have been attacked for their corruption, ineptness, stubbornness, and unwillingness to conform to the American way. More often





forgotten than remembered in the years since 1915 when he first voiced them, are Woodrow Wilson's thoughts on the subject: "... only an honest and efficient government deserves support. The Government of the United States could not justify the expenditure of money or the sacrifice of American lives in support of any other kind of government." It seems probable, however, that the root causes of the American failures in Haiti and in Vietnam are more fundamental to the human condition than mere errors in political judgement.

A study of history appears to support the thesis that political freedom, progress and evolution are seldom, if ever, successfully imposed from without. This is the conclusion drawn by the writer from his study of the American intervention in Haiti. This is what he sadly expects to see confirmed when the final chapters are written concerning the American intervention in Vietnam.



## CONTENTS

Abstract	1v
Part One. Haiti Prior to the Intervention	1
I. <u>From Columbus to the Revolution</u>	2
II. <u>Revolution and Independence</u>	11
III. <u>The Black Republic</u>	18
IV. <u>The Widening American Concern</u>	32
V. <u>The Winding Path to Anarchy</u>	39
VI. <u>The Era of the Ephemeral Governments</u>	66
Part Two. Intervention and Occupation	104
VII. <u>The Establishment of American Control</u>	105
VIII. <u>The Treaty</u>	121
IX. <u>Pacification</u>	134
X. <u>A New Constitution</u>	145
XI. <u>The Caco War</u>	157
XII. <u>Occupation Diplomacy</u>	170
XIII. <u>The Purloined Letter</u>	175
XIV. <u>The Mistreated Missionary</u>	183
XV. <u>The Senate Select Committee</u>	193
XVI. <u>The High Commissioner</u>	205



Part Three.	Retreat	222
XVII.	<u>The Occupation Under Attack</u>	223
XVIII.	<u>The Disorders of 1929</u>	239
XIX.	<u>The President's Commission</u>	250
XX.	<u>The Occupation on Trial</u>	257
XXI.	<u>A Political Settlement</u>	267
XXII.	<u>The Case for the Defense</u>	276
XXIII.	<u>The Commission's Report</u>	285
XXIV.	<u>Haitianization and Withdrawal</u>	292
XXV.	<u>Epilogue</u>	304
XXVI.	<u>Conclusions</u>	307
	Bibliography	318





Part One

Haiti Prior to the Intervention

"What is past is prologue. Study the past."

- Pedestal inscriptions, north entrance,  
National Archives, Washington, D.C.



## I. From Columbus to the Revolution.

So lovable, so tractable, so peaceable are these people that I swear to your Majesties there is not in the world a better nation nor a better land.

- Columbus, to Ferdinand and Isabella.

However it is approached - by sea, by air, or overland along impossible roads from the Dominican Republic - Haiti's outstanding feature is its mountains. The name "Haiti" itself is of Indian origin, probably meaning "the high place." Other than a few stone artifacts, it remains almost the sole reminder of the Ciboneys, Arawaks, and Caribs who once lived there.

Hammond's World Atlas credits Haiti with 10,714 square miles of territory, some 80 per cent of which is mountainous. The Cordillera Central or Cibao Mountains extend through the northern peninsula raising peaks as high as 8,000 feet above sea level. In the southeastern region of the country the La Selle range, and in the southern peninsula the La Hotte, form the backbones of Haiti's two other mountain groups. Seen from afar they are not unlike some parts of the great Appalachian range in the southeastern part of the United States.

There are three principal rivers and three lowlands. The largest of the rivers, the Artibonite, flows into the sea near Gonaives on the west coast, after passing through a wedge-shaped valley of the same name. The second river,





La Grande Anse, drains a part of the rugged southern peninsula and has its mouth near Jérémie. The third, Trois Rivières, empties into the sea on the north coast near Port de Paix. Between the mountains and the sea in the north lies the Plaine du Nord, the most fertile region in the country. Between the central and southern ranges, extending from the capital, Port-au-Prince, into the Dominican Republic, is the great semi-arid plain known as the Cul de Sac. The climate is tropical, but the island, particularly in the north, is cooled by prevailing sea breezes.

It is not, of course, altogether correct to call it an island. The Haitians are heir to only roughly one-third of an island. Except for relatively brief periods in the nineteenth century when it was conqueror of the whole, Haiti has been the uneasy bedfellow of the Dominican Republic, occupier of the eastern two-thirds of the island of Santo Domingo (or Hispaniola). The island they share, however, has one of the most strategic locations in the Western Hemisphere. From the southeast it commands the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico. More important still, the two great ocean highways linking North America and Europe to the Panamanian isthmus - the Mona Passage on the east and the Windward Passage on the west - stream by its coasts, a fact not unnoticed by naval strategists from Morgan to Mahan. The island's nearest neighbors in the chain of the Greater Antilles are Cuba to the northwest and Puerto Rico to the



southeast. New York lies some 1300 miles north.

Little is known of the original inhabitants of the island. They left no monuments, no written records. Those who welcomed Columbus called themselves Tainos (the Good People) and it is thought that they were of Arawak stock. The story of how and when they and the other island tribes came to Haiti lies shrouded perhaps forever in the past.

The island is believed to be the sixth point of land charted by Columbus on his first voyage of discovery to the New World, and his landfall was probably made near Mole St. Nicholas on December 5, 1492. From there his tiny squadron felt its way eastward along the coast until, on Christmas Day, at Bord de Mer, near Cape Haitian, disaster struck. The flagship, Santa Maria, grounded and all efforts to refloat her were unavailing.

From the ship's timbers a small fortification was constructed on the nearby shore. Salvaged provisions from the wreck were used to provide a meager supply of stores, and with much difficulty a few of the ship's cannon were dragged ashore. Some 38 volunteers remained behind when Columbus set sail with his remaining two ships on the return voyage to Spain. The stockaded shelter built from the wreckage of Santa Maria was christened "La Navidad" in honor of the day the grounding had occurred.

It is not known what transpired among the band of thirty-eight during the Admiral's absence, for on his





return the following year there were no survivors.

Columbus came back to La Isla Espanola (later to be known by the somewhat Latinized "Hispaniola") with a larger expedition, permanent settlers, and plans for making the island the center for Spain's further exploration and exploitation of the New World. Chance and perhaps geographical imperative led to the establishment of the principal Spanish city and emporium on the island at Santo Domingo, on the southeastern coast, a more convenient taking off point for the Spanish fleets sailing to Central and South America. The city, the first permanent Spanish settlement in the Western Hemisphere, was founded in 1496 by Columbus' brother, Bartholomew. This shifting of Spanish interest to the eastern part of the island is of the utmost significance in Haiti's later development.

There never was a great deal of mineral wealth on the island and the few placer mines where the Indians gleaned their bits and specks of gold were soon panned out, to the disgust of the conquistadores. Sugar cane, however, introduced from the Canary Islands on Columbus' second voyage, thrived in the receptive soil and climate of Hispaniola. Its intensive cultivation hastened the extinction of the island's aborigines, already being carried away by European diseases, for they proved to be ill-adapted to heavy field labor. "Of a native population estimated at 300,000 in 1492, 60,000 were counted in 1508





and in 1548 less than 500."<sup>1</sup> At the urging of the Bishop Bartolemé de las Casas, who was touched by the horrors inflicted on the Indians, the Spanish Crown consented to the importation of African slaves. The first blacks arrived in 1512 and were put to work chiefly in the eastern part of the island. For more than a century the western part (Haiti) was virtually deserted.

The hegemony of Spain on Hispaniola, as in other parts of the New World, was not destined to go unchallenged. In 1629, French and English survivors of a Spanish expedition against their "illegal" settlement on the island of St. Christopher in the Leewards, made their way in open boats to the small island of Tortuga, off the north-western coast of Hispaniola. They were later joined there by Dutch refugees. From their custom of cooking meat over Indian spits called "boucans," they came to be known as "boucaniers" - a name that would cling to them in slightly corrupted form when they later turned their hunting instincts to the sea.

Continually harassed by Spanish expeditions against them, they organized a society called the "Brethren of the Coast" which, with the tacit support of English, Dutch, and French warships and privateers, proceeded to terrorize the Spanish Main. Their principal settlement on Tortuga,

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1. Selden Rodman, Haiti: The Black Republic, (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1954), p.5.



Cayona, was for a time one of the most prosperous, and reputedly the most dissolute and bawdy of "colonies" in the West Indies.

A chronic shortage of women on Tortuga was redressed from time to time by the purchase of negro women from traders, or by their abduction along with a few white women from the Spanish settlements. Indentures and prostitutes were also occasionally imported from Europe. From these heterogenous unions were to spring the Creole and mulatto people destined to play such prominent roles in the later history of Haiti.

From about the middle of the seventeenth century, French influence was predominate on Tortuga, and that influence gradually spread along the adjacent coasts of western Hispaniola. Small settlements and farms sprang up along the banks of rivers and spread into interior valleys - a development foreshadowing the great French plantation society that would flower in the next century. Thus it was that by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, France acquired title to the "French part of Santo Domingo," or Saint Domingue.

For administrative purposes, France divided her new colony into three provinces. In the northwest was North Province, containing the fertile Plaine du Nord and the colonial capital, Cap Francais (later Cape Haitian). West Province comprised the central part of the colony, the northern shore of the Haitian "notch" and the Cul de Sac.





Its principal city, Port-au-Prince, was not founded until 1749. South Province was the rugged and almost inaccessible southern peninsula.

The economic development of the colony during its French period was impressive by any standards. Magnificent plantation homes dotted the plains and vast armies of slaves toiled in the cultivation of sugar, coffee, indigo, cotton and cocoa. Cap Francais became an opulent center of wealth and the arts - the "Paris of the Antilles" - while in European Paris the expression "rich as a Creole" became proverbial. Saint Domingue was renowned as the richest colonial possession in the world and for a time the value of its foreign trade overshadowed that of the thirteen English colonies on the North American mainland. On the eve of the French Revolution the annual value of Saint Domingue's foreign commerce was somewhat in excess of \$78,000,000, and more than 1,400 vessels and 11,000 seamen were employed in the trade with Europe alone.<sup>2</sup> Personal property in the colony was valued at nearly \$300,000,000. The foundations of this wealth, however, were extremely unstable. The census of 1788 counted 28,000 whites, 22,000 "gens de couleur" (mulattoes and free negroes), and 405,000 slaves. Moreover, the social fabric within each of the racial groups - the whites, the mulattoes, and

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2. International Bureau of the American Republics, Haiti, A Handbook, Bulletin No. 62 (Revised to September 1, 1893), (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1893), pp. 87-88.



the blacks - was rent by jealousy, suspicion and hate. The native-born whites resented their French-born administrators. The mulattoes, owners of an estimated 10 per cent of the colony's land and slaves by 1789, were notoriously cruel taskmasters who drew the "color line" with almost paranoic precision. The free blacks themselves aspired to be slave owners, a status they seemed to covet almost as much as they had their own freedom. At the festering bottom of the social heap, the very worst ignominy for a black was to be slave to another black.

The collapse of this delicate and fragile structure that was Saint Domingue in the closing decade of the eighteenth century came about not, however, as a result of an internal failure of its underpinnings, but as a direct result of the winds of revolution which swept France in this period and which were felt in gale strength as far away as the West Indies.

Six representatives of the island's plantation aristocracy succeeded in being seated at the Estates General in France which convened in 1789. If their hope had been to secure a voice for their colonial constituency, they succeeded all too well. Once the situation in Saint Domingue had been brought to their attention, the emerging Jacobin politicians of France, egged on by a rabid abolitionist society, Les Amis des Noirs, spoke out in support of full political rights for the mulattoes and, eventually, for the freeing of the slaves. The colony was flooded



with propaganda urging liberty and equality, stirring the poor whites, the mulattoes, and the blacks alike. The racial pot was brought to such a dangerous boil that the third element in the revolutionary motto - fraternity - seemed ephemeral indeed.

On March 12, 1791, at Cap Francais, two young mulattoes, Vincent Ogé and Chavanne, were broken on the wheel in public execution. Their crime was agitation against the white aristocracy for those citizenship rights promised by the Jacobins in France. The spot where they were smashed by the executioner's rod is today called the Square of the Martyrs. Many human beings would perish there in the storm that was now plainly gathering. Ogé and Chavanne had sounded a tocsin that was soon to be heeded in the brooding countryside surrounding the glittering Cap.





## II. Revolution and Independence.

So now, in the Autumn of 1791, looking from the sky-windows of Cap Francais, thick clouds of smoke girdle our horizon, smoke in the day, in the night fire; preceded by fugitive shrieking white women, by Terror and Rumour. Black demonized squadrons are massacring and harrying with nameless cruelty. They fight and fire 'from behind thickets and coverts,' for the Black man loves the Bush; they rush to the attack, thousands strong, with brandished cutlasses and fusils, with caperings, shoutings and vociferation, - which, if the White Volunteer Company stands firm, dwindle into staggerings, into quick gabblement, into panic flight at the first volley, perhaps before it. Poor Oge could be broken on the wheel; this fire-whirlwind too can be abated, driven up into the Mountains: but Saint-Domingo is shaken ... writhing in long horrid death-throes, it is Black without remedy; and remains, as African Haiti, a monition to the world.

- Carlyle, The French Revolution.

The Jacobin winds from France had blown the elusive scent of freedom to the island, and during the summer of 1791, jungle drums thundered secret messages across the Plaine du Nord and up into the marons - the mountain fastnesses of Haiti. The revolt finally erupted on the night of August 22, 1791, at Turpin Plantation, not far from Cap Francais. In the weeks that followed, bands of marauding negroes roamed the rich plain at will, killing, raping, looting, burning. The hated symbols of their past servitude - the bell towers that had summoned them to labor in the fields, the cane mills - were razed to the ground, along with the splendid homes of their erstwhile masters. They were finally checked at the gates of Cap Francais



itself, but by then the surrounding countryside was a smoking ruin and the white survivors of the holocaust were virtually besieged in the cities and towns of the colony.

From an alarmed France Commissions were dispatched, but the Commissioners, pledged to an anti-slavery policy and cheered on by the Amis des Noirs, only succeeded in exacerbating the situation. The melancholy climax of this first phase of the Haitian Revolution was reached in June, 1793, when Cap Francais was given over to savage looting and burning. Refugees streamed across the border into Spanish Santo Domingo, and from every port in the French colony overcrowded ships sailed for the United States, the nearby islands, and sometimes even for France, itself now in the grip of the Terror. The Chief Commissioner, one Sonthonax, remained remarkably unperturbed, however, and reported to the home government that "... it is with the real inhabitants of this country, the Africans, that we will save to France the possession of St. -Domingue."<sup>1</sup> On August 28, 1793, apparently on their own authority, the Commissioners proclaimed the formal abolition of slavery in North Province, an act that was confirmed by the government in France in February of the following year when it issued a decree abolishing slavery in all French colonies

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1. Quoted in H. P. Davis, Black Democracy; the story of Haiti, (New York, The Dial Press, 1928), p. 43.





and declaring that all men domiciled therein, regardless of color, were citizens of France. The Spanish in Santo Domingo and the British in Jamaica could hardly view these acts with indifference, and, the mother countries both being then at war with France in Europe, the opportunity was seized to claim parts of Saint Domingue for themselves. Spanish forces, aided by a ragtag army of some 600 negroes led by a black ex-coachman named Toussaint, advanced into the French part of the island from the east. The British, welcomed by the remnants of the proprietor class in South and West Provinces, occupied Mole St. Nicholas. By the spring of 1794 they were in Port-au-Prince with a large and well-financed expedition, while Toussaint, his force swollen to more than 4,000 men, was victor in a dozen battles and had achieved high rank in the Spanish army.

At this moment, the seeming nadir for France in Saint Domingue, two unrelated events occurred which dramatically altered the military and political balance on the island. In April, 1794, Toussaint with all his black troops suddenly deserted the Spanish and joined forces with the shattered French. The second event was the serious outbreak of fever in the British expedition. The Spanish invasion of Saint Domingue collapsed almost overnight, and when, in 1795, peace came in Europe, Spain ceded all of the island of Santo Domingo to France by the Treaty of Basle. The British, bedeviled by disease and bitter guerrilla warfare, were forced back into their principal strongholds at Port-au-





Prince and Mole St. Nicholas. The fortunes of war now clearly favored France, but a France whose power in Saint Domingue rested primarily on black armies, not white. By the fall of 1797, Toussaint L'Ouverture ("The Opener") was commander in chief of the army and nominal custodian of French interests in the colony.

In October, 1798, the British surrendered their last foothold on the island at Mole St. Nicholas. Like the Spanish, they had paid a heavy price for their Saint Dominguan adventure; some 50,000 of their troops are believed to have perished in the campaign. Toussaint next struck out at the dissident southern mulattoes, who were chafing under his "black" rule. He unleashed one of his lieutenants, Jean Jacques Dessalines, "The Tiger," on a brutal march through South and West Provinces. This was but the first of many racial purges that would stain the pages of Haitian history. The mulattoes in check, he dispatched another army to occupy the former Spanish part of the island.

By 1800, Toussaint, honored as "First of the Blacks," ruled, in the name of France, all of Hispaniola. The land had been devastated by nine years of war. The farms, the mills, the irrigation ditches and the roads had fallen into a ruinous state throughout the island. And across the sea Napoleon Bonaparte brooded on the lost treasures of Saint Domingue.

A temporary truce in Europe meant that Britain's sea-



power was no longer an obstacle to the movement of French troops and supplies across the Atlantic. Napoleon decided to seize this opportunity and gave orders for the outfitting of an expedition which he entrusted to the command of his brother-in-law, Leclerc. In December, 1801, more than 50 ships bearing 22,000 troops, many of them veterans of Napoleon's own campaigns, sailed for the West Indies.

Leclerc, accompanied by his wife, Pauline, sailed with explicit instructions to secure Saint Domingue by a lightning campaign planned in detail by Bonaparte himself. There were also orders for the social reconstruction of the colony. "White women who have prostituted themselves to Negroes, whatever their rank, shall be sent to Europe.... Suffer no black above the rank of captain to remain on the island ... any person talking about the rights of those blacks who have shed so much white blood shall under some pretext or other be sent to France, whatever his rank in the service."<sup>2</sup>

On February 3, 1802, the van of the French fleet glided past the silent batteries of Fort Picolet and dropped anchor in the harbor of Cap Francais. The city was held by a small force under the command of Henri Christophe, one of Toussaint's trusted lieutenants. Prior to retreating he put the city to the torch so thoroughly that barely 60 buildings were standing when Pauline saw for the first time what was to have

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<sup>2</sup>. Quoted in H. P. Davis, Black Democracy; the story of Haiti, New York, The Dial Press, 1928), p. 64.





been her New World capital.

Despite severe fighting in the interior, the French achieved all of their important military objectives in but a few weeks. On May 1, 1802, Toussaint and Dessalines surrendered with their troops. The "First of the Blacks" was subsequently spirited out of the country on the French frigate La Créole and carried to France, there to die the following April in a dungeon at the fortress of Joux. In contradiction to Napoleon's orders, however, Dessalines joined Christophe on the commissioned lists of the French army, for another one of those amazing turnabouts in the history of the revolution was then in progress. Malaria and yellow fever swept through the French ranks like a whirlwind, and despite pleas of ever increasing urgency, Leclerc was unable to secure sufficient replacements from France, though Napoleon would send him in the course of that terrible year more than 20,000 additional men. The French commander thus had no choice but to take the desperate gamble that he could retain control by playing the black generals off against each other. That slim hope utterly vanished when, late in the summer of 1802, word spread to Saint Domingue that by order of Bonaparte slavery had been reinstituted in the West Indian islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

By the middle of October the remaining French on the island were reduced to a precarious garrison existence in but six cities. On November 28, 1802, Leclerc died of fever





at the Cap, and Pauline returned to France. Leclerc's successor, Rochambeau, held on for another agonizing year while the ring gradually tightened. In October, 1803, Port-au-Prince fell to Dessalines, and a month later Rochambeau surrendered the remnants of the French army at Cap Francais.

When, under the terms of the surrender, Rochambeau and 8,000 beaten soldiers sailed from the Cap on November 29, 1803, they left behind the graves of nearly 45,000 brothers-in-arms who had perished in Napoleon's vain attempt to restore the island to French control. They also left behind a still sizeable white population which had somehow managed to survive twelve crimson years of revolution.

Thus ended Napoleon's dream of New World empire. The failure in Saint Domingue is believed to be an important factor - perhaps the determining one - in his abrupt decision to part with Louisiana. The later history and expansion of the United States may therefore be seen to have been significantly influenced by the events recounted above.

Rochambeau and his army were captured at sea by a British squadron, and were imprisoned for the duration of the war which had once again broken out in Europe. The uneasy, threatened whites of Saint Domingue, cowering in the unnatural silence of their cities, would not be so fortunate.



### III. The Black Republic.

We will write this act of Independence using a white man's skull for an inkwell, his skin as parchment, blood for ink, and a bayonet as pen.  
- Dessaline's secretary, at Gonaives, January 1, 1804.

On January 1, 1804, the day celebrated as Haitian Independence Day, the victorious black generals gathered at Gonaives and proclaimed Jean Jacques Dessalines "Governor-General of Haiti for life." According to legend it was Dessalines himself who gave Haiti her name and her flag. With his own hand he is said to have symbolically torn the white stripe from the French tricolor and cast it underfoot. What remained would be the National Ensign of the Haitian Republic until, at a much later date, the blue stripe was, appropriately enough, replaced by a black. African born, uneducated, ex-slave to an ex-slave, a man of ferocious instincts, he held in his heart pitiless hatred for all whites, as exemplified by his motto: "Dessalines hates the whites."

His first official act was to decree death to the French still unfortunate enough to be in the country, and when his subordinates seemed reluctant to carry out this genocide, he himself led a murderous troop through those cities and towns still providing shelter for the condemned. The massacre began in the first days of January and continued into the spring of 1804. Before it ended, the whites





in Haiti were exterminated as a class, not one in ten escaping slaughter. The news of this terrible event spread far beyond the Haitian frontiers and was noted with particular concern and alarm in the United States, where refugees recounted tales which aroused fears in that Republic of black revolution.

The destruction of the white population in Haiti was paralleled by the devastation wrought on the land. No revolution, no war in modern history ever so completely uprooted, demolished and eradicated the social, political and economic structures of a country. It has never recovered to this day, and while, to be sure, the formal institution of slavery was abolished, personal and political freedom, for the overwhelming mass of the Haitian people, did not attend the removal of the French. At best what occurred was the substitution of one form of despotism for another, neither one of which holds any special attractiveness on the pages of history.

The reign of Jean Jacques Dessalines was brought to an abrupt end by the assassin's bullet on October 17, 1806, at Pont Rouge, on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. Though his leadership was short in time, it was long in accomplishment. In addition to the formal founding of the Republic and the 'solution of the French problem," he caused the first Haitian constitution to be proclaimed which, in addition to abolishing slavery forever, prohibited white men of whatever nation from acquiring property of any kind. He attempted to restore



the island's agricultural prosperity, an effort that was unfortunately not successful. Peasants were herded to work in the fields under a share-cropping scheme whereby they were to receive one-third of the harvest. Three groups claimed proprietorship over the ruined plantations. These were, first of all, the military chiefs, then the ancien libre or pre-revolutionary free blacks and mulattoes who still held title to land, and lastly, the mulatto sons of dispossessed white fathers.

With Dessalines dead, a military council met and named Henri Christophe "Provisional Chief of the Nation." At the same time, however, the council called for a constitutional assembly and the formal election of a new head of state. This assembly, the first legislative body to be created in Haiti, met on December 18, 1806, in Port-au-Prince. One of the leaders of the assembly was Alexander Pétion, a mulatto educated in Paris who had returned to Haiti as an officer in Leclerc's army. Christophe was quick to sense in Pétion his chief rival for power. The political struggle between the two ultimately degenerated into a fitful civil war, and after several skirmishes, during which he managed to capture a large part of Dessalines' treasure, Christophe withdrew with his army to the north. Haiti was thenceforth effectively split into two parts, with Pétion in control of the South and West Provinces, and Christophe in command of the North.

Until March, 1811, Christophe governed the North as "President of the State of Haiti," but in that month he





published the "Loi Constitutionnelle du Conseil d'Etat qui établit la royauté à Haiti." On June 2, 1811, the Chiefs of the North gathered at the old French colonial capital to witness the coronation. The Archbishop of Haiti, himself recently elevated to that post by Christophe, did the crowning, proclaiming the new monarch Henri I. A nobility was established with 4 princes, 8 dukes, 22 counts, 37 barons and 40 chevaliers, among whom were a Count of Limonade and a Duke of Marmelade - titles taken from districts in North Province facetiously named by the French. Cap Haitien, recently Cap Francais, was renamed Cap Henri.

By the King's order in the Code Henri, every adult man and woman in the kingdom was required to work "from daylight to 8 o'clock, then one hour off for breakfast on the spot; from 9 to 12, then two hours off; and from 2 P.M. until nightfall."<sup>1</sup> The soldiers of the king enforced this regimen and an almost instant prosperity returned to the North. The problem of a circulating currency was solved by a most ingenious device. All ripe gourdes in the country were declared state property and were collected by the Crown. The gourde was and is useful to the Haitian peasant in the manufacture of dishes, tools, containers, musical instruments, etc. Gourdes were then paid out as wages for work performed on state lands, or in exchange for home-grown crops - princi-

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1. Quoted in J. W. Vandercook, Black Majesty; the Life of Christophe, (New York, Harper and Bros., 1928), p. 134.





pally coffee. To this day the unit of Haitian currency is called the gourde, though it has, of course, long since ceased to be an actual gourde.

The Citadel la Ferrière, Christophe's - and Haiti's - greatest monument, was begun on orders from Dessalines in 1804. In shape it is a stupendous warship, built with incredible labor on a mountain peak called La Bonnet a l'Eveque - the Bishop's Hat - some 3,000 feet above sea level, 20 miles inland from the Cap. The prow of this great fortress points to magnetic north and its walls, 20 to 30 feet thick, range in height from 80 to 130 feet. Three hundred and sixty-five cannon, some of them 11 feet in length, trophies captured from the French, the British, and the Spanish, were dragged up the mountain and emplaced in the fortress along with immense quantities of shot and powder. The construction of the Citadel continued throughout the years of Christophe's reign and, as attested by the events immediately following his death, was still in progress when the kingdom came to an end. Christophe seemed obsessed with the necessity of completing this work, driving his people mercilessly. He himself is said to have labored on the walls as a mason, sometimes by moonlight.

In 1820 he suffered a stroke which left him paralyzed from the waist down. Deserted by his servants, the nobility and the army, he committed suicide at Sans Souci when word reached him that a mob was advancing on the palace. His wife and daughters somehow managed to drag his body up the



mountain to the Citadel, where it was placed in a pit of newly mixed builder's lime. The spot is today marked by a weathered stone inscribed simply, "Christophe - L'Homme."

In 1818 Christophe's great rival, Pétion, had died in office of natural causes, one of the few Haitian presidents to enjoy that distinction. He was succeeded by the mulatto commander of the palace guard, Jean Pierre Boyer, who used his position to secure unanimous election to the office. He began his 25-year career as Chief of State on March 20, 1818. Christophe's suicide enabled Boyer to reunite the country. The only disappointment in a bloodless campaign in the North was the discovery that there was in King Henri's treasury not more than 10 million francs, instead of the hoped for 250 million. The following year, 1821, the Spanish part of the island revolted from Spain (which had reclaimed it during the troubles following the death of Dessalines) and with but little persuasion it attached itself once more to the Republic. Thus the whole island was again ruled from Port-au-Prince.

Boyer's rule, the longest in Haitian history, was marked by unsuccessful attempts to restore the island's lost prosperity. The great estates of colonial times were effectively broken up into small parcels, but land reform seemed only to hasten the separation of the people into two rigid social classes - the peasants and the élite. The former subsisted by share-cropping small plots of ground or by harvesting the upland coffee which now grew wild. The latter gravitated to





the cities, controlled the army and the government, and lived on the labor of the peasants by collecting export duties on their cash crops.

Prior to Pétion's death a new and more liberal constitution had been adopted and authority divided between executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. A court system was established and a larger bureaucracy formed to satisfy the political aspirations of the élites, largely mulatto, who now openly harked back to and embraced the old French, Catholic culture.

From the very beginning of élite rule, certain practices crept into the treasury service which became firmly rooted there and which had a very bad effect on the operation of the government. One of the worst of these concerned the system adopted for the payment of public employees, including the army and the navy. Payments were customarily made by claims on the treasury called feuilles, which were often left unredeemed for long periods of time, particularly during "la saison morte" or the time between crops when, the customs receipts being much less than at other times, there was often insufficient funds in the treasury to cash them. Speculators would routinely purchase feuilles at huge discounts and by exerting influence at high levels of government secure preferential treatment. Often the government itself was able to purchase feuilles at a discount. Graft and dishonesty were invited by the administrative procedures adopted and over a period of time became thoroughly ingrained in the



ethics of the Haitian public service.

An attempt was made to revitalize the country by encouraging immigration from abroad of persons of African or Indian origin, particularly colored people from the United States. In a four-year period some 13,000 freedmen were enticed to Haiti with promises of free land and other benefits. The experiment ended in dismal failure, however, and most of the immigrants left Haiti at the first opportunity or abandoned their land for unproductive life in the towns. Many charged that the discrimination they encountered on the island made their existence there little better than slavery, and few were able to adapt to the different customs, religion, language and laws of Haiti.

In 1822 Boyer appealed to the United States for recognition, but President Monroe declined, arguing that France had withheld recognition, that discrimination was practiced on American commerce, and that the Haitian constitution embodied anti-white articles. French recognition was secured in 1825, but at a price. Under the guns of 14 ships of war anchored in the harbor of Port-au-Prince, the Haitian Government agreed to pay an indemnity of 115 million francs as compensation to former French colonists. A second concession was that French trade with the island would be assessed at only one-half the duty charged other countries. The financial drain to meet even partial payment of the French debt was so great that in 1827 Boyer was forced to issue the first Haitian paper currency. His success with





it was not nearly so great as had been Christophe's with ripe gourdes. There was no possibility that this vast foreign obligation could be discharged, and Haiti's inevitable default brought on what was but the first of many such crises in its foreign relations.

The economic ills of the country, growing discontent among the masses, and dissatisfaction in the army led to a revolt against the President in January, 1843. In March of that year Boyer resigned from office and embarked on a British warship. He died in Paris in 1850.

Following Boyer's resignation another period of political and racial turmoil shook the island. The peasant blacks, promised impossible advantages by those who had organized the overthrow of the President, felt that they had been deceived. A vicious class warfare broke out and in the general confusion the Dominicans, in 1844, reasserted their independence. The sudden death of Boyer's nominal successor, Riché, on February 27, 1847, caught the mulatto élites who controlled the Haitian Senate, responsible under the constitution for the election of the president, unprepared. To placate the blacks they eventually agreed to select as president, some say by drawing his name from a hat, the 60 year old, illiterate head of the palace guard, Faustin Soulouque. He was thought to be both naive and agreeable, a most willing instrument through which the mulattoes could exercise political control while satisfying the demands of the black masses for a black president. Within two years, however, Soulouque





learned enough about the exercise of power to overthrow his patrons and carry out, in a few terrible days in April, 1848, a widespread massacre of mulattoes in Port-au-Prince. His hold on the government secure, he turned his interest to the first of a series of disastrous military campaigns designed to reannex the Dominican Republic.

On August 26, 1849, at the "urging" of his officers, he assumed the title of Emperor Faustin I. The coronation was an extremely extravagant affair which took place in a scene of great public jubilation at Port-au-Prince. The nobility created by Faustin dwarfed even that of Christophe. The Emperor adopted as his motto "I am the State and my will is law."

In spite of an almost paralyzed economy, Faustin pressed his prolonged and expensive invasions of the Dominican Republic. Both countries were pushed to the brink of financial ruin by this war, which was eventually ended by the joint diplomatic intervention of the United States, Britain, and France. His hold on the army weakened by the Dominican failures, and the country in a severe and worsening depression, the Emperor was deposed by a mulatto general, Fabré Geffrard, in January, 1859.

The eight years of Geffrard's presidency cast a relatively bright light on the overall somberness of nineteenth century Haiti. In 1860 a concordat was signed with the Holy See, and Rome assumed responsibility for the propagation of the Catholic faith in Haiti, in exchange for state financial support.



Clergy were dispatched to bring the island's faithful back to orthodoxy. On June 5, 1862, the administration of Abraham Lincoln extended formal diplomatic recognition to the second oldest "republic" in the Western Hemisphere. In Boston, abolitionist societies celebrated the act as "a recognition of the Colored Man, not merely of Hayti."<sup>2</sup> Recognition was followed, in 1864, by a Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, which affirmed most-favored nation treatment of American commerce in Haiti, a status enjoyed on an informal basis since 1850. The treaty further stipulated that Americans resident in Haiti and Haitians resident in the United States would not be required to pay "any contributions whatever, higher or other than those that are or may be paid by native citizens."

The years of Geffrard's rule were also marked by the final efforts to foster negro colonization of Haiti from the United States. In 1860 an emigration bureau was opened in Boston under the direction of a militant abolitionist and associate of John Brown, Mr. James Redpath. Colorful and attractive brochures were printed and circulated. Prospective settlers were promised free passage to Haiti, land, temporary housing and subsistence, and exemption from military service. By November, 1861, some 1200 negroes had been embarked for Haiti. Distressing stories of privat-

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2. Quoted in Ludwell L. Montague, Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938, (Russell & Russell, New York, 1966), p. 86.





ion, disease, and ill-treatment of the pioneers gradually filtered back to Boston, however, and by the end of 1861, public meetings were being held to denounce the colonization scheme. In all, Redpath was responsible for sending about 1600 American negroes to Haiti, but in 1862 only 200 could be accounted for there. Some, it is assumed, managed to return to the United States.

In spite of this dismal experience, the federal government in Washington decided, in 1862, to embark on a colonization scheme of its own to alleviate the growing problem of dependent negroes freed by the American Civil War. On December 31, 1862, President Lincoln contracted with a private organization to settle 5,000 American negroes at Ile-a-Vache in Haiti. This too ended in debacle, and shortly thereafter the Haitian Government lost interest in such projects. Only 431 negroes were transported to Haiti by the federal contractors, and most of these were later returned to the United States.

The repeated failure of American negro colonization in Haiti pointed out a distressing fact. The Haitian negro, who had won his freedom in a bloody revolt from the French, rather openly despised his American brother who, in Haitian eyes, had been given his freedom. This prejudice was deeply ingrained, and in the years ahead cultured Haitians would look with disfavor on the assignment of American negroes as employees or representatives of the United States in Haiti.



130

Revolutionary activity at Cape Haitian in 1866 resulted in the British consulate being violated, and in reprisal the city was shelled by British warships. In September of that year the arsenal at Port-au-Prince was blown up with the loss of many lives and great destruction of property. When, in the following year, the presidential guard revolted and began firing at the palace, Geffrard took the route of his predecessors and on March 13, 1867, sailed for Jamaica.

Geffrard's immediate successor in office, Salnave, attempted to repeat the maneuver in which Soulouque had been so successful. He encouraged the peasants to rise against the mulatto bourgeoisie, but instead of quick victory over the mulattoes, a protracted period of bitter civil strife ensued. In 1870 the presidential palace, converted by Salnave into a powder magazine, was struck by a shot fired from a captured government vessel in the harbor, and was utterly destroyed by the resulting explosion and fire. The President escaped momentarily to Santo Domingo, but was arrested there and returned to Port-au-Prince where, bound to a stake amid the rubble of the palace, he was executed by a firing squad.

An editorial which appeared April 6, 1871, in the Gazette du Peuple, Port-au-Prince, is revealing.

For sixty eight years ... what have we done?  
Nothing or almost nothing. All our constitutions  
are defective, all our laws are incomplete, our  
customs houses are badly administered, our navy  
is detestable, our finances are rotten to the core,  
our police are badly organized, our army is in a



pitiable state, the legislative power is not understood and never will be, the primary elections are neglected and our people feel not their importance, nearly all our public edifices are in ruins, the public instruction is almost entirely abandoned.

Following the execution of Salnave, a succession of "presidents" each one of whom entered and/or left the office by unconstitutional means, held the trappings of power in Port-au-Prince. Nissage-Saget (1870-1874), Michel Domingue (1874-1876), Boisrond Canal (1876-1879), and Lysius Salomon (1879-1888) made their brief appearances on the disordered pages of Haitian history.

The presidency of Florvil Hyppolite (1889-1896) gave the country a brief respite from its long political misery. Foreign investment was encouraged. The revolutionary claims of France were funded by a bond issue, though at ruinous cost. Some schools were established and a body of law enacted. Public buildings were constructed, most notably the famous iron markets which still stand in the principal cities of Haiti. There was even serious effort to limit graft and improve the efficiency of government. Representative government was not functioning, however, and indeed had never really functioned, as Haiti prepared to enter the twentieth century.





#### IV. The Widening American Concern.

As far as can be seen, the time will come when stable governments for the American tropical States must be assured by the now existing powerful and stable States of America or Europe. The geographical position of those States, the climatic conditions, make it plain at once that sea power will there, even more than in the case of Turkey, determine what foreign State shall predominate - if not by actual possession, by its influence over the native governments. The geographical position of the United States and her intrinsic power give her an undeniable advantage; but that advantage will not avail if there is a great inferiority of organized brute-force, which still remains that last argument of republics as of kings.

- Alfred Thayer Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783.

It is perhaps well at this time to depart for a moment from the chronological account of Haitian history, and review the several aspects of American interest in the Black Republic. The picture is somewhat complex, for there was ever a wide variance of views and conflicting concerns among Americans with economic or emotional ties to Haiti. American policy was thus forged in the heat of opposing forces, forces which seldom, if ever, seemed to add rationally as vectors on a force diagram. It is just this aspect of policy formulation which makes its study so intriguing, for seemingly insignificant acts and events have from time to time become governing, and have directed American policy in unpredictable ways. Thus it was, as will be seen, when American intervention in Haiti came, it came when what might have been considered compelling reasons for it - the desire for a Caribbean naval base, the need to forestall European



intervention, etc. - had ceased to exist as a result of the American war with Spain and the involvement of the European powers in their own war in Europe. And, paradoxically, the intervention came not under Theodore Roosevelt, but Woodrow Wilson.

It is almost as if there were a peculiar inertia shaping the affairs of men, a great weight attached to a strong but elastic line tugged at over a period of years or decades by those intent on displacing it in their own direction. When it finally begins to move, the elasticity of its tether carries it beyond the position of its first movers who may, in fact, have already surrendered their hold on the line to others of opposing inclination. The process may then be seen to begin again in reverse. This swing effect in American foreign policy is as observable as the rise and fall of the ocean tides, but its regularity and predictability in time are by no means so precise. The forces of change and inertia are ordinarily so nicely balanced that a minuscule weight applied at a critical time may achieve an effect that is apparently grossly disproportionate and even, to an uncritical eye, irrational.

American interests in Haiti pre-dated the independence of both Republics, for the sugar islands of the West Indies, of which Hispaniola was by far the richest, were an integral link in the chain of trade upon which rested the prosperity of New England merchants. Slaves and fish products were traded in the islands for cheap molasses which, converted





into rum in New England towns, was sold to acquire more slaves and to expand the fisheries. British interference with this trade (manifested by the several Molasses Acts) can indeed be said to have been one of the prime irritants leading to the American revolution.

Haitian and American independence did not alter the basic commercial relationship between Haiti and the New England states, though of course the Black Republic no longer provided a market for African slaves. The Haitian revolution did, however, cause considerable alarm and foreboding in the southern states of the North American Republic, anxious over the example set for their own large slave populations by the Haitian negroes. Henceforth a profound dichotomy of interests concerning Haiti developed along geographical lines in the United States. In general, the North urged recognition and expanded ties with Haiti because it seemed it would be good for business. The South routinely blocked recognition and cared little for the trade interest of the North. It is significant that in regard to Haiti, recognition came only after the secession of the southern states.

Naval developments, the acquisition of California, and concern over the effective control of an isthmian route to the Pacific influenced American interests in Haiti. American naval power, a late arrival on the Caribbean scene, found the best sites for naval bases already taken by the European powers, with Samana Bay in the Dominican Republic, St. Thomas



in the Danish West Indies, and Mole St. Nicholas in Haiti the only attractive sites still thought to be attainable. The decline of sail and the emergence of steam as a means of naval propulsion made such a base in the Caribbean even more vital in the eyes of naval strategists, for the new propulsion system "shortened the legs" of warships and made necessary the pre-positioning of large stockpiles of coal in the areas where such ships would be required to operate. Pressures for Caribbean bases and coaling stations peaked during and shortly after the American Civil War. The decline of the great Union fleet after that war and the completion of the first trans-continental railroad in 1869 (which lessened for a time American interest in the isthmian route to California) cast an eclipse on the project of Caribbean bases, a project which, despite aborted attempts to annex the Virgin Islands and the Dominican Republic, did not revive in earnest until American interests turned once again toward an isthmian canal and the rebuilding of the American Navy.

How much did the philosophy of "manifest destiny" shape American policy in Haiti during the latter part of the nineteenth century? Throughout American history there has been an unfortunate fascination with the mission civilisatrice, but insofar as Haiti itself is concerned (the same would not be true for the Dominican Republic) there seems at no time to have been serious consideration given to the annexation of Haiti to the United States,





though this was suggested as a possible cure for Haiti's problems by President Andrew Johnson in his message to the Congress on December 9, 1868. The political and racial realities, to say nothing of the experience of France on the island, tended to dampen ardent annexationist spirits. To many, the Haitian problem seemed simply insurmountable, wrapped as it was in the American negro problem. The last serious negotiations for a base at Mole St. Nicholas took place in 1889-1890 when, in spite of considerable American assistance given President Hyppolite in his climb to office, the project failed, probably because of the Haitian constitutional bar to the white ownership of property.

If the fire of manifest destiny was dimmed in Haiti, that other beacon of American policy in the Caribbean, the Monroe Doctrine, most definitely was not. Several incidents already cited illustrate that the guns of foreign warships were not slow to enforce what was considered vital state interest. The threat to the Monroe Doctrine lay in the chance that a casual bombardment or landing of troops might blossom into full-scale and permanent foreign occupation. Gradually the feeling grew in American governing circles that if military demonstrations were necessary to keep Haitian affairs in order, those demonstrations should be American, not European. This theory was simply a forerunner of Theodore Roosevelt's "corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine. Visits to Haiti by United States naval vessels





became more frequent and, in 1888, U. S. marines were landed at Port-au-Prince to quell a disturbance which seemed to threaten the safety of foreign nationals. The European powers did not accept exclusive American protection of their interests, however, and their own cruisers continued to call at Haitian ports. A most glaring example of foreign military pressure, and one with somewhat humorous overtones, occurred in 1897.

A German national named Emil Luders, who was the operator of a livery stable in Port-au-Prince, attempted to prevent the arrest of one of his Haitian employees by claiming extraterritoriality for his stable. He was himself arrested on a charge of assault and battery growing out of the affair, and was eventually sentenced to a year in prison and fined \$500. Luders, however, was a veteran of the German army, and had in fact served in the Kaiser's own regiment. An imperial letter was dispatched to the Haitian president, Simon Sam, demanding the release of the distinguished livery stable operator, the punishment of those responsible for the arrest, the removal of the judges who had passed sentence, and the payment of a large indemnity. The Haitian government appealed to the United States for aid in the name of the Monroe Doctrine but none was provided. When the Kaiser sent two cruisers to enforce his demands, the American Minister in Port-au-Prince felt that the United States had made a mistake and that it was losing influence in Haiti, a position adhered



o by prominent Americans including Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge.

The Spanish-American War and its immediate aftermath saw a dramatic increase in American naval power and a growing tendency among certain Americans, made heady by the easy victory over Spain, to consider the Caribbean an American mare nostrum. The acquisition of naval bases in Puerto Rico and in Cuba (Guantanamo Bay) made such bases in Haiti or the Dominican Republic unnecessary, but American admirals still expressed concern lest another sea power - and in this period they most often meant Germany - should establish itself there. The policy of the Navy in regard to Haiti thus changed from one advocating acquisition of bases on the island, to a policy of denying them to potential enemies. The broader aspects of American policy in the Caribbean were of course stated in no uncertain terms in President Theodore Roosevelt's message to Congress on December 6, 1904. Henceforth it would be the resolve of the United States to "exercise an international police power" in the Western Hemisphere should "chronic wrongdoing" on the part of delinquent states require it. Gradually, the arrival of an American warship in a troubled Haitian port became the accepted signal for the "guard" to be shifted.

Meanwhile, its finances a shambles, its politics impossible, the Haitian state careened along its dangerous way.





## V. The Winding Path to Anarchy.

However, it is visible that God protects our little corner of the earth; for notwithstanding the faults of its children, the country is still unimpaired, and will so pass into the hands of our children's children.... And thus if all citizens give me their aid, we would easily avoid the misfortune that has fallen on Dominica.

- President Nord Alexis of Haiti, at public audience, February 5, 1905.

At 7:25 in the morning on April 11, 1900, a large meteor of great brightness crossed the sky over Port-au-Prince, trailing a long train of nebulous matter that remained visible for some moments. About three minutes after its passage, a loud explosion shook the city. The sound was so sharp as to cause a trembling of the earth. The phenomena caused considerable anxiety among the Haitian populace, who looked upon it as foretelling dire disasters to the Republic.

Indeed, a sign from heaven was scarcely needed, so precarious had become the condition of the Haitian state. Yet another financial crisis was throttling the life of the economy, and grave constitutional questions were being aired concerning President Simon Sam's term of office.

The Haitian external and internal bonded debts were ordinarily secured by pledges made against the customs receipts. These receipts were paid into the National Bank of Haiti, a French corporation which was granted its concession during the administration of President Salomon,



on April 1, 1880. The signer of that concession for Haiti, the President of the National Assembly, had a peculiar and, judging from later circumstances concerning the Bank, humorous name - "Innocent Coco."

The 1900 crisis was rather simply founded on the fact that an inadequate percentage of the customs receipts was finding its way into the state treasury, that is, the Bank. The Haitian customs service, needless to say, was notoriously corrupt. By a remarkable feat of legerdemain, however, the government debt was refinanced and consolidated, further mortgaging anticipated state revenues. Two classes of bonds, payable in 14 years, were issued. The first, known as Les Grandes Consolidations, would bear interest at 12% per annum. The second, Les Petites Consolidations, would yield only 6% per annum. It was stipulated that both interest and principal were payable in American gold. The Consolidated Debt was approved by a unanimous vote of the Haitian Senate and House of Delegates, and the vote itself should have been cause for suspicion. The consolidation and the role of the National Bank merit further attention, but first it will be necessary to examine the concurrent political situation.

Articles 90 and 93 of the Haitian Constitution concerned the election of Presidents. They read:

Article 90. The President of the Republic is elected for seven years. He will enter upon the duties of his office on the 15th of May. Only after an interval of seven years ... [may he succeed himself].





Article 93. In case of the death, resignation or forfeiture of the President, the one who replaces him is named for seven years and his functions end always on the 15th of May, even though at that time the seven years of his powers are not finished. During the vacancy, the Executive Power will be exercised by the Secretaries of State in Council assembled, and under their responsibility.

The joker in the case of President Sam, who was elected by the National Chambers on April 1, 1896, upon the sudden death of General Hyppolite, was that at the time of his election a law was enacted requiring him to enter upon the duties of the presidential office at once and to remain in office until May 15, 1903..

It is perhaps proper at this time to state that the Haitian Constitution failed to provide for judicial review of acts of the legislature, such as that performed by the Supreme Court in the United States. Thus, there was a body of opinion in Haiti (the "Ins") which held that acts produced by the executive and legislative branches of the government were perforce constitutional. Another body of opinion (the "Outs") held otherwise.

According to Article 93 of the Constitution, General Sam's term of office would expire on May 15, 1902, but by the 1896 law his term would not expire until a year later. The electoral system in Haiti, patterned after the French, further aggravated the situation. The Chamber of Deputies was elected by popular vote to serve for a term of two years. The Chamber was in turn responsible for the election of the upper house, the Senate, whose members served





for a term of six years. When a President was to be elected, both houses met in joint session as the National Assembly, and the election took place at the congressional session just preceding the expiration of the presidential term. By tradition there were many candidates, for not only honor and a legal salary of \$24,000 in gold awaited the successful candidate, but almost unlimited opportunity to pillage the state treasury. Not surprisingly, the electors were frequently wooed with promises of material advancement, as well as eloquent appeals to patriotism. If this judgement of Haitian political morality in the period seems harsh, it is nevertheless believed to be accurate.

Adding to the comic opera overtones in Port-au-Prince at this time were the unabashed maneuverings of the great powers for commercial advantages. France, which the year before had signed a commercial treaty with Haiti resulting in mutually reduced tariffs, heaped ceremonial honors on high officials in the Haitian Government. The Minister of Finance and the Haitian Minister in Paris both received the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, and on President Sam was conferred the Grand Croix de l'ordre de l'Etoile Noire. Paris financial journals commented favorably on the financial honesty of Haiti's officials in meeting their debts. The United States Minister in Port-au-Prince, Mr. William F. Powell, never ceased to act the role of a one man chamber of commerce and consistently urged American capital to enter



Haiti, particularly in the fields of banking and railroads. He entertained lavishly, and a ball given by the Powells in honor of President McKinley's second inauguration won special praise in the Port-au-Prince press. Guests entering the Legation were greeted by a huge eagle, fashioned in artificial flowers, with outspread wings, holding in its beak a ribbon with the inscription "E Pluribus Unum."

The German community in Haiti, meanwhile, took the much more direct and practical step of subscribing substantial funds toward the expenses of the German Government in building new vessels to be added to the German Navy. By coincidence, shortly after the announcement of the German subscription, an Italian cruiser paid a visit to Port-au-Prince to press, successfully, a claim against the Haitian Government.

It was apparently the intent of General Sam to serve at least until May 15, 1903, but certain irregularities in the January, 1902, legislative elections created such an uproar that it became obvious he would have to step down. It was said that in many places in the country only those were allowed to vote who would promise to cast their votes for the government's candidates. In other cases where opposition candidates received a majority of the vote, their election was set aside and some others named in their place. If anyone protested such action he was arrested. As in all Haitian elections, great use was made of the army. Troops were marched to the polls and their votes cast as a group.





The National Assembly delayed the vote for a new President until May 12, 1902, when apparent agreement was reached on President Sam's candidate, General Leconte, who was believed to have the backing of the German community. A rumor circulated that Leconte had promised Germany a coaling station at Mole St. Nicholas, and an angry mob forced its way into the Legislative Chambers just prior to the ballot. Shots were fired and the disturbance spread into the street. In all, some 100 persons are thought to have lost their lives.

At the early hour of 6 A.M. the next morning, the American Minister received a summons from the palace. He was requested, in his capacity as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, to grant protection to the President and his Cabinet. Powell called his colleagues to a hasty meeting at the American Legation, and at 11 A.M. the diplomats as a body escorted the outgoing administration of General Sam to the harbor, where they embarked on a steamer. The ex-President rode in Powell's own carriage.

The American Minister reported that "the President, General Sam, retires from office moderately well fixed for his future, having been able to secure and place to his credit in France about 12,500,000 francs, or \$2,500,000."<sup>1</sup>

As was customary in Haitian revolutions, "Committees

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1. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Despatches from U. S. Ministers to Haiti, 1862-1906, Powell to Dept. of State, No. 1092, May 17, 1902, Micro Copy M-82, Vol. 38.



of Public Safety" were established in Port-au-Prince and all other major cities of the country to continue the essential functions of government and to exert influence in the choice of the Provisional Government that would be formed pending new elections. Leading candidates in the changed political circumstances busied themselves raising armies, and there were threatened marches on the capital. General Firmin, commander of the "Army of the North," quickly emerged as perhaps the strongest contender.

In spite of instructions to remain strictly neutral, Powell, in his role of doyen, persuaded his French, German, and British colleagues to join him in a letter to Firmin which urged that his army remain clear of the capital. The diplomatic corps also recommended to the home governments that round-robin visits of warships be scheduled during the current unrest. Powell had occasion to be grateful for USS Topeka's presence in Port-au-Prince, for while escorting the particularly hated ex-Minister of Interior and Police, General Tancrede Auguste, to the landing for embarkation on a steamer, an ugly mob gathered and had to be dispersed by crewmen from the cruiser.

Late in May, 1902, representatives from the various Committees of Public Safety met in Port-au-Prince and a Provisional Government was formed with Boisrond Canal, an elderly ex-President of the Republic, assuming the interim executive power. General Firmin was not represented, and in the threatening calm which followed he remained with his





troops in the north. In July another election, Haitian style, was held, but at almost the same moment a vessel of the Hamburg-America line arrived from New York with a long-awaited cargo of 1500 rifles and coal for General Firmin in Gonaives. The rifles were carefully packed in barrels labeled "pork." The coal was for the antique Haitian gunboat Crete à Pierrot which, with the mulatto admiral, Killick, had joined forces with Firmin. The civil war was promptly renewed.<sup>2</sup>

The expansion of Haiti's domestic quarrels to the high seas, however, raised international questions. Admiral Killick proclaimed a blockade of certain Haitian ports, and the Provisional Government responded by declaring those ports controlled by Firmin to be also in a state of blockade. The question thus raised, of course, was that of effective blockade, and the United States, which 41 years earlier had seen its efforts to close certain Confederate ports by paper blockade properly laughed at, this time adhered strictly to international law. American naval officers were directed to give protection to American and unprotected foreign vessels if it was determined that the declared blockades were not effective. Given the state of the contending Haitian navies, that determination was almost a foregone conclusion. Nevertheless, Admiral Killick in the Crete à Pierrot prevented the American merchant ship Paloma from entering Cape Haitian, and commercial

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2. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Despatches from U. S. Ministers to Haiti, 1862-1906, Powell to Dept. of State, No. 1122, July 21, 1902, Micro Copy M-82, Vol. 38.





interests went into uproar. On September 2, 1902, however, he made a fatal error when he stopped, searched, and removed goods from a vessel of German registry some 40 miles from the Cape.

The German Chargé d'Affaires immediately cabled his government, and four days later the German gunboat Panther found the Crete à Pierrot at anchor in the harbor at Gonaïves. An ultimatum was delivered, at the expiration of which the Panther opened fire. Admiral Killick directed that three kegs of powder, some large cartridges, and a can of kerosene be placed in his cabin, with a powder train laid to the quarterdeck. He then ordered his officers and men ashore. The last thing he was seen to do was to fire the powder train with his cigar. A terrific explosion tore the ship apart. The Panther then steamed out of the harbor, ignoring the pleas of German residents in Gonaïves who were terrified by the angry mob which quickly filled the streets, shouting "kill the Germans!" and "kill the whites!"<sup>3</sup>

Killick's charred body was discovered floating in the harbor the next day and was taken ashore and buried with honors. Thus did Haiti acquire her first naval hero, even though he commanded forces dedicated to the overthrow of the nominal government.

Though his naval arm was now destroyed, General Firmin

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3. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Despatches from U. S. Ministers to Haiti, 1862-1906, Powell to Dept. of State, No. 1158, Sept. 13, 1902, Micro Copy M-82, Vol. 39.



continued to press his struggle against the Provisional Government, which was itself finding it difficult to field an army. The American Minister reported that "in the mountain districts ... [recruits] are hunted like wild animals and are driven into the cities like a drove of cattle with their legs tied together with rope, sufficiently long to enable them to walk, and their arms tied behind them." <sup>4</sup>

It was Powell's conviction, stated in a series of despatches, that the prolongation of the Haitian civil war was primarily due to foreign commercial houses making money out of both parties in the conflict. Large loans, guaranteed by a percentage of the already heavily pledged customs revenue, were made to both the Provisional Government and to Firmin. Arms and munitions at double their real value were similarly supplied. Those providing money and arms knew that their interests were secured regardless of which side won, for, as in the past, their home governments would apply diplomatic pressure, backed by the threat of naval bombardment, to whatever Haitian authority eventually achieved control. Under the circumstances, foreign interests could not lose. An interesting illustration of this game of playing both ends against the Haitian middle is the fact that it was a German vessel, of the same line as that later stopped by Killick,

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4. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Despatches from U. S. Ministers to Haiti, 1862-1906, Powell to Dept. of State, No. 1171, Sept. 22, 1902, Micro Copy M-82, Vol. 39.





which supplied the coal needed by the Crete & Pierrot.

Powell's solution to this dilemma was the displacement of foreign commercial interests by American, and he was thus one of the earliest and most persistent advocates of "dollar diplomacy," an attachment which would later lead to his own downfall.

The Provisional Government finally found a military leader of some ability in the aged General Nord Alexis. St. Marc and Gonaives were taken, and Firmin and his followers were forced to embark. On December 14, 1902, General Nord Alexis, a vigorous 85, entered Port-au-Prince at the head of an army of about 5,000 men. There was some minor skirmishing and perhaps 15 persons were killed, but the situation quickly stabilized. The army proclaimed its general President of Haiti, an act ratified four days later by the National Assembly.

As might have been expected, the new President of the Republic found state finances in utter chaos. The public debt had skyrocketed to nearly \$29,000,000. Emergency measures were taken to double the duties on imports, to tax government bonds (originally issued as tax-free instruments), and to drastically increase the circulation of paper currency. A Special Commission was appointed to look into the recent consolidation of the public debt, and grumbings in the House of Delegates were silenced by forcibly dissolving that body. When the Minister of Finance resigned, no one would volunteer to succeed him.



Late in June, 1903, the Special Commission, composed of two judges of the Supreme Court, an official of the National Bank, and two businessmen, made their interim report to the President. They charged the Bank with being wholly responsible for the issue of \$2,000,000 worth of fraudulent bonds, and that the Bank itself had shared in the proceeds of that issue. The French Director of the Bank, Mr. J. de la Myre, denied the charge and, to make matters worse, informed the President that the government had overdrawn its account at the Bank and additional funds would not be advanced to pay the army. The President was then quoted as telling his officers that there was money in the Bank, and to "go and get it." 5

The more the "Consolidation Scandal" was investigated, the worse it seemed. Orders were issued for the arrest of all members of General Sam's cabinet, and one of those officers, unlucky enough to have delayed his flight, was interrogated by the Commission. He testified before that body that the fraudulent issue of bonds had been made and distributed, that he himself had strongly opposed the measure when it was introduced at a Cabinet meeting, but that he had been outvoted. The investigations continued, and by October, 1903, the most glaring frauds, amounting to nearly \$3,000,000, had been discovered. In virtually

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5. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Despatches from U. S. Ministers to Haiti, 1862-1906, Powell to Dept. of State, No. 1316, July 2, 1903, Micro Copy M-82, Vol. 40.





all of them the National Bank of Haiti seemed to have profited equally with the late administration. The Bank, on its part, claimed that it was not responsible because it had acted at the direction of the Haitian President and the Minister of Finance. In November, Nord Alexis ordered the arrest of all the senior officials of the National Bank, including the Director, Mr. de la Myre. Another diplomatic crisis threatened, for most of the arrested officials were French, and under the protection of the French Minister.

At year's end the Government's position was desperate. Public employees had not been paid for months, and while in the past some funds had always been found to pay out to them for the holidays, this year there were none. Only the army was paid, the Government borrowing at high interest and in exchange for customs due bills, from the smaller commercial houses. No money was available to make preparations for Haiti's Centennial, talked about for years, and due to be celebrated on January 1, 1904. To keep the opposition in check, the Government resorted to terror, mass arrests, and public executions. The foreign legations were filled with refugees, and the American Minister reported that many of those fleeing the police entered his grounds by scaling a 20 foot wall. In mid-January the German Minister threatened to have marines landed to quell disturbances at Port-au-Prince.

The distress of the Haitian people worsened as the year progressed. A disastrous fall in the foreign exchange





rate brought skyrocketing prices for those goods which had to be imported. Much of Haiti's retail trade was then in the hands of Syrian merchants, and the Government deliberately started a vicious campaign against them, fanning long-smouldering racial hatreds. There were then about 1200 Syrians of all nationalities except German in Haiti. By the President's decree in mid-March, 1905, all who were not naturalized or citizens of some other country were ordered out of the country by April 1. Syrian shopkeepers made frantic efforts to sell their goods and close their stores. Many had large families and were terrified by the freely circulating stories of machetes being sharpened by the soldiers and the lower classes. The American Minister urgently requested the presence of a naval vessel, fearing the outbreak of looting and arson. Traffic boomed in counterfeit naturalization certificates.

On April 1, 1905, those Syrians who could not secure the protection of another state were forced out of business and out of Haiti. Their departure was almost immediately marked by another round in the spiraling inflation. Powell reported that "there are many families here among the middle class that are in a state of almost semi-starvation.... Many families are parting with their jewelry and articles of wearing apparel to obtain money to buy food." <sup>6</sup>

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6. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Despatches from U. S. Ministers to Haiti, 1862-1906, Powell to Dept. of State, No. 1709, April 5, 1905, Micro Copy M-82, Vol. 45.



Meanwhile, the trial of those connected with the "Consolidation Scandal" had finally been held. Powell thought that the Haitian Government placed itself in a compromising position when the Minister of Foreign Relations informed the French Minister that the Bank officials had to be tried and condemned for "political reasons." The French Minister lost no time in communicating that remarkable statement to the French Government and the press. Correspondents from the leading Paris newspapers were sent to Port-au-Prince to report on the trial.

The Haitian Government presented a careful and fully documented case, more than 200 witnesses appearing for the prosecution. In the opinion of the American Minister, the complicity of the Bank was established beyond all reasonable doubt, though he felt that the Government erred in bringing the Bank's officials and not the Bank itself to trial. On Christmas Day, 1904, the jury delivered its verdict. Found guilty and sentenced to various fines and prison terms of up to four years were the Bank's Director and several lesser officials. Concerned members of General Sam's government were more severely dealt with, and sentences ranging upward to life imprisonment at hard labor were meted out to T. Simon Sam, ex-President of the Republic; Tancrede Auguste, ex-Minister of the Interior; Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, ex-Minister of War; and Cincinnatus Leconte, ex-Minister of Public Works. It is a striking comment on the times that of the guilty Haitians named, only one served any part of his sentence,





and the last three named were later elected to the office of President of the Republic:

In July, 1905, the American Minister was recalled to Washington for consultations and there became involved with a "syndicate of Capitalists" in a startling international intrigue.

The disastrous defeat suffered by Russia in the battle of Tsushima Straits, May 27-28, 1905, left the Czar virtually without a navy. It was patently impossible to build a new fleet in time to continue the war at sea against Japan, but one might be bought if the price were right. Powell's syndicate of Capitalists became interested and found, not one, but two states that were willing to part with their navies under certain conditions. One of those conditions was that the sale had to be indirect, through another state, in deference to their own nice respect for international law and concern over possible Japanese reprisal, remote as that possibility seemed.

Thus it was that Powell was approached in Washington by a representative of the syndicate which by chance was even then considering, at his urging, a new consolidation of the Haitian debt. If the Haitian Government would agree to buy the naval vessels of Chile and Argentina (with money advanced by the syndicate), and subsequently agree to transfer those vessels to agents of the Russian Government at a place to be determined on the high seas, the syndicate would pay the Haitian Government the sum of "\$200,000 or \$250,000"



as soon as the sale was confirmed. It seems probable that the vagueness of the syndicate's offer was deliberate, and the uncertain \$50,000 reserved as a personal inducement to the Haitian Minister in Washington, Mr. J. N. Legér, should that prove necessary. The receptiveness of Mr. Legér to the proposal, made by Powell at a Sunday meeting, is not known, but he did agree to meet with the syndicate's representative the following Tuesday.

Powell began to have second thoughts, however, about how best to approach the Haitian Government on this delicate matter. He wrote privately to the Deputy Consul in Port-au-Prince, Mr. Battiste, and instructed him to inform, unofficially, the Haitian Minister of Foreign Relations, Mr. Ferrière, of the substance of the syndicate's proposal and to state that the matter was then in the hands of Legér in Washington.

Mr. Legér, when he found out what Powell had done, considered it, perhaps not without reason, an attempt to put him in a compromising position with his government concerning the indefinite \$50,000. The Haitian Minister responded quickly, with high moral indignation, by registering a serious, and public, complaint with the American State Department, charging Powell with attempted bribery. What President Roosevelt, even then grooming himself to act the role of peacemaker in the Russo-Japanese War, thought about this airing of his Minister's interest in seapower may well be imagined.





Powell was permitted to return to Haiti to clean out his desk, and his long years of service ended there on November 25, 1905, more than a month prior to the arrival of his successor. Ironically, the Haitian Navy was even then awaiting delivery of the ex-Prins Gagarin, a 600 ton vessel which for 16 years had plied the Black Sea under the Russian flag. It was said to have cost the German agent of the Haitian Government 120,000 francs at auction, and was sold to Haiti for about \$300,000 in American gold.

It is doubtful if any American diplomat ever stepped into a situation more fraught with chaos than did Henry W. Furniss, the new Minister at Port-au-Prince. A colored man from Indiana, of private means and shrewd native intelligence, he owed his appointment to the strident lobbying of negro groups in the United States. Thus it was that the two most important State Department posts in Haiti were filled by negroes throughout most of the decade preceding the American intervention, for the consul at Cape Haitian, Lemuel W. Livingston, was also a colored man. Both men were discerning and articulate reporters, and their influence in the shaping of American policy toward Haiti in this period can scarcely be argued.

Furniss established himself in a new and comfortable house in the suburbs of Port-au-Prince and became an interested spectator of the Haitian political scene which flashed, kaleidoscope-like, through a bewildering procession of plots and counter-plots. He bought a horse





and traveled extensively through the countryside, mastering the local patois and studying the life and customs of the people. What he found was an almost wholly illiterate and apolitical peasantry ruled by venal and unscrupulous "generals" and politicians whose only goal seemed to be access to the treasury. This view, rather fully shared by Livingston, led both men to favor and encourage direct American action to right the crying wrongs of the Black Republic.

What Furniss observed and reported concerning the evils of the Haitian political system and the sham of its "democratic" institutions, would be verified and reinforced by the statements and writings of dozens of equally qualified reporters in the years ahead. Yet it seems doubtful that such reports ever significantly tarnished the popular myth of a small negro republic, in the clutches of foreign exploiters and would-be conquerors, fighting for freedom, and liberty, and justice. As has been shown, foreign exploiters there were, as well as those who coveted ultimate control of the land and the people, but Haiti's real distress could always be traced to failures of the human spirit in her ruling class. That regrettable fact, however, did not comport with the reformer's and the zealot's image of Haiti, and it was predictable that reaction to the American intervention, when it came, would result in demands for a "return" to conditions of democracy which Haiti had never actually enjoyed.



The closing years of the Nord Alexis regime were distinguished by the brutal and the bizarre. The President, then approaching the age of ninety, seemed to be mentally unbalanced, and his derangement took on certain vicious characteristics that boded ill for those who opposed him or who aroused his suspicion.

In September, 1907, a special military tribunal was established to try 17 persons accused of conspiracy against the government. In his address to the court, the prosecuting attorney said, among other things, that "it was necessary that all the prisoners should be found guilty and shot, even if the Government had to wade through blood to do so, in order that it might be shown to the Government of the United States of America that they [the Haitians] were able to maintain order and were able to promptly put down all attempts at revolution without the intervention of that Government."<sup>7</sup> The attorney for the defense, when he finally got an opportunity, said that the very illegality and arbitrary action of the court would, for the sake of humanity, appear to be reason enough for intervention by the United States. He was not permitted to go on with his speech, the presiding officer tapping a bell which caused bugles to blow and drums to beat, effectively drowning out whatever further was said. In less than half an hour, all

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7. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical File, 1906-1910, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 244, Sept. 26, 1907, Vol. 219, Case 2126.





the prisoners save one were found guilty and ordered shot. The "trial" illustrates both the quality of Haitian justice, and what was plainly a growing preoccupation with the threat of American intervention. The latter was, of course, quite understandable in view of American actions elsewhere in the Caribbean, most notably next door in the Dominican Republic. The American "menace" was a frequent topic of discussion.<sup>8</sup>

Political executions became so frequent that victims were jokingly said to have contracted a "sudden disease," and this became the accepted euphemism for the murder of those the government wanted quietly out of the way. Foreign legations and consulates were jammed with those seeking asylum, and at this moment the United States reversed its former liberal policy concerning the granting of asylum. Apparently convinced that abuse of the right of asylum was a contributing factor to political turmoil, and acting against the advice of Furniss, who had the support of the entire diplomatic community in Port-au-Prince, Secretary of State Elihu Root, in January 1908, ordered an end to the sheltering of Haitians in the American Legation and in all American consulates in Haiti. When he later learned that local revolutionary leaders remained in the consulate at St. Marc, he summarily revoked that consul's commission. The affair at St. Marc had an extremely unhappy denouement, however, for no sooner was the American flag lowered from

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8. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical File, 1906-1910, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 461, Dec. 4, 1908, Vol. 221, Case 2126.



the former consulate, but Haitian soldiers rushed in to drag the refugees out. They were then marched to the cemetery where, after digging their own graves, they were shot.<sup>9</sup> A helpless spectator to this was the Commanding Officer of the American gunboat Eagle, himself under verbal fire for violating the new American neutralism by his action in earlier preventing the Haitian Navy from bombarding the town.

Somewhat taken aback by the summary slaughter of the St. Marc refugees, Root cabled Furniss instructions to hold any remaining Haitians seeking sanctuary "until absolute guarantees from the President and Government of Haiti can be obtained for their trial according to the orderly operation of Haitian law."<sup>10</sup> Such a statement revealed an appalling misconception of the true state of affairs in Haiti. Furniss courageously tried, once again, to put things in proper perspective.

Conditions in Haiti are such that it would be impossible to have any guarantee carried out as to legal and proper trials.... To consent ... to the delivery of the refugees ... to the Haitian Government for trial would just be going through a form which would in reality guarantee nothing for the accused. But even granting that the parties would have a fair trial and would be legally condemned, there is nothing to prevent their being cast into prison to be tortured, exposed, and either made

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9. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical File, 1906-1910, Commanding Officer USS Eagle ltr 25-EJF of Feb. 5, 1908, Vol. 220, Case 2126.

10. Ibid. Secretary of State to Furniss, Cable, Feb. 3, 1908, Vol. 220, Case 2126.





away with or allowed to die of some lingering disease easily contracted in the prison. Under such conditions ... it would really be more humane to deliver the refugees to the Haitian Government and allow them to be as summarily dealt with as were those who took refuge in our Consular Agency at St. Marc.... My opinion as expressed is also the opinion of all my colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps.<sup>11</sup>

In spite of its apparent cruelty and its faulty execution in time, the new American policy was unquestionably wise and long overdue. Consular asylum, though in fact practiced for many years in volatile Latin American states, had no generally accepted basis in international law. The existence of so many safe havens scattered throughout coastal Haiti took much of the risk out of revolutionary activity. It is significant that among those expressing sorrow to Furniss over the new policy, were distinguished members of the Nord Alexis administration itself, perhaps looking forward to the day when they themselves would have to flee for their lives. By April, 1908, the American Legation and consulates in Haiti were entirely cleared of refugees, most of whom managed to find shelter in the legations and consulates of other foreign powers. Asylum ceased to be a matter of pressing concern to the American Minister in Haiti. He had, however, other problems.

In April, 1907, Mr. James Gordon Bennett, publisher

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11. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical File, 1906-1910, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 299, Feb. 4, 1908, Vol. 220, Case 2126.





of The New York Herald, had visited Haiti with a group of friends while on a yacht cruise. By chance he met a Haitian senator who took him to call on the President. Mr. Bennett was pleased with his reception and the Haitian officials were particularly gratified with his treatment of them. Later the Government sent presents of coffee, fruits, and other products of Haiti to him, and the upshot was that a Herald correspondent was sent to "interview President Alexis and take sides with his Government."<sup>12</sup> The correspondent, a Mr. de Armas, spoke French fluently and his long service as a newspaperman had made him naturally inquisitive. His investigation of Haitian affairs soon led him to the conclusion that it was impossible to further defend the government. He cabled his observations to Bennett, who replied instructing Mr. de Armas to "tell the truth" but to be as "easy as possible on the present Government."<sup>13</sup>

The Herald stories, at first read with eager pleasure by officials in Port-au-Prince, soon soured. Mr. de Armas left Haiti in fear of his life, but his place was taken by an undercover correspondent for the newspaper, and sensationalism crept into the accounts now regularly appearing in the pages of the Herald. Speculation about possible American intervention, and editorial comment which seemed

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2. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical file, 1906-1910, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 431, Sept. 10, 1908, Vol. 220, Case 2126.

3. Ibid.



to urge that course of action enraged the Nord Alexis regime, and strengthened the opposition whose pledge it now was to save Haiti from the "American peril."

How much the Herald stories sped the downhill slide of the Haitian Government is a matter of conjecture. By November, 1908, a full-scale revolt was underway, however, and its leader was Antoine Simon, for 18 years Governor-General of the Department of the South. Government troops sent forth to do battle were literally tied together to prevent their desertion. Furniss and his French and German colleagues recommended joint intervention to protect foreign interests and put an end to the disorders. American firms doing business in Haiti bombarded the State Department with pleas that troops be landed. From Secretary Root came the terse and unequivocal reply that the "United States has no idea of intervening in Haiti."<sup>14</sup> By coincidence the record contains a personal letter dated one day prior to Root's cable to Furniss, which sheds some light on why Theodore Roosevelt failed to intervene in Haiti at what must have seemed a propitious moment. The letter is the President's, to Wm. Bayard Hale, editor of the Saturday Review of Books.

... The trouble as regards Haiti is not that the Government fails to understand the situation, but that the people, especially the educated people, refuse to understand it. The Times and Evening Post, for instance, represent a large constituency

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14. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical File, 1906-1910, Secretary of State to Furniss, Cable, Dec. 4, 1908, Vol. 220, Case 2126.





which was lukewarm or hostile to what I did about Santo Domingo - than which nothing so good for Santo Domingo has ever been done. I got it thru the Senate by two year's hard work, without a particle of aid from what likes to call itself the "educated conscience" of the people of the country. Now, in Haiti, what we need is something that will show our people that this Government, in the name of humanity, morality, and civilization ought to exercise some kind of supervision over the island; but this should be done as a part of our general scheme of dealing with the countries around the Caribbean. In Cuba, Santo Domingo and Panama we have interfered in various different ways, and in each case for the immeasurable betterment of the people. I would have interfered in some similar fashion in Venezuela, in at least one Central American State, and in Haiti already, simply in the interest of civilization, if I could have waked up our people so that they would back a reasonable and intelligent foreign policy which would put a stop to crying disorder at our very doors. Such a policy would be a little in our own interests, but much more in the interest of the peoples in whose affairs we interfered. I think Mexico would have gone in with us on a rational policy. But in each case where I have actually interfered - Cuba, Santo Domingo and Panama, for instance - I have had to exercise the greatest care in order to keep public opinion here with me so as to make my interference effective, and I have been able to lead it along as it ought to be led only by minimizing my interference and showing the clearest necessity for it. In the other cases I have mentioned, tho the need was great, it was not as great as those in which I did take action, and the need could not have been as clearly shown to our people. Our prime necessity is that public opinion should be properly educated....<sup>15</sup>

Nord Alexis, ninety-one and terribly frail, left the palace at Port-au-Prince at five o'clock in the morning on December 2, 1908, and accompanied by the French Minister with a cavalry escort, proceeded to the harbor where he

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15. U. S., National Archives, Department of State, Numerical File, 1906-1910, Theodore Roosevelt to Wm. Bayard Hale, Dec. 3, 1908, Vol. 220, Case 2126.



was embarked in a French warship. Despite the early hour, large crowds had gathered where it was supposed he would pass. Several persons attempted to strike him, and shots were fired at his entourage. The crowd took possession of his baggage, breaking open the trunks and completely cleaning them out, taking all of his clothing, private papers, and money.

After the President embarked there was considerable "jolification" in the city. Many who had guns spent the greater part of the day and night shooting in the air. The whistle of bullets near the American Legation became so common that Minister Furniss considered it unsafe even to sit on the back porch of the building. He may be forgiven if he viewed the fall of the government with an overall feeling of relief. On the morrow, however, Simon's army would clatter through the streets of Port-au-Prince and usher in a new and almost incredible period in Haitian history.



## VI . The Era of the Ephemeral Governments.

As Bobo and his four frock-coated dusky followers mounted the ladder, it was observed that all carried their suitcases upon which had been painted:  
"Dr. Rosalvo Bobo, Chief of the Executive Power,"  
"Dr. So and So, Minister of the Interior," etc.  
- Commander C. S. Baker, (SC) U.S.Navy

The suitcases observed in the hands of an aspiring Haitian administration as it boarded an American ship in the harbor of Port-au-Prince in 1915 were appropriate symbols of the political history of Haiti in the last years prior to the American intervention. On December 17, 1908, Antoine Simon was elected to the presidency for the constitutional term of seven years. In the seven years following that election no fewer than seven presidents were elected and deposed in Haiti. Simon himself served the longest, two years and seven months. The rapidity of the turnover thereafter well explains why this period of their history is called by the Haitians the "Epoque des Gouvernements Ephémères."

General Simon added a certain flair, an artistry to the plunder of the state treasury. For one thing, he had a large family to provide for, and all his sons were given important offices where the opportunity for pilfering was great. His daughter, Celestine, became a grey eminence behind the throne, openly practiced voudeaux, and peddled influence. The President's "perquisites" - pay and allowances for a regiment that didn't exist, "secret funds,"





"rations," etc. - amounted to a little more than \$1,000, 000 a year in addition to an official salary of \$25,000. On his birthday \$25,000 was appropriated for fireworks used in the celebration, and a skeptical Furniss reported that \$100 would have more than covered the actual expenses associated with the display. In September, 1910, a special law was passed setting aside the sum of \$50,000 gold for the purchase of a plantation for the President "in return for amounts which he has to personally expend on various occasions for the public good."<sup>1</sup>

To the Simon administration fell the task of reorganizing the National Bank, now increasingly in difficulty due to rampant corruption in the customs service. In February, 1909, the Bank proposed a new contract which would give to it the responsibility for collecting revenues and apportioning disbursements, a proposal which the American State Department, in registering its disapproval, characterized as "a business proposition under which officials of the bank may be enabled to assume a control over the political affairs of the State, a condition which would tend to result in the complete subjugation of Haitian political rights to French commercial interests and the increased influence of a private corporation at the expense of the nation."<sup>2</sup>

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1. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 731, Sept. 17, 1910, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 29.

2. Ibid., Numerical File, 1906-1910, Dept. of State to Furniss, Feb. 23, 1909, Vol. 125, Case 874.



Germany, through its Dresden Bank, attempted to buy out the French interests, and failing that, urged Simon to force the National Bank into receivership. With the encouragement of the American State Department, a group of New York firms, including the National City Bank, entered a bid. The eventual reorganization of the bank, in August, 1910, resulted in 74% of the stock going to the original French holders, 6% to the Dresden Bank, and 5% each to the American firms of National City Bank, Messrs. Speyer & Co., Hallgarten & Co., and Ladenburg Thalmann & Co., the last three being houses of close German affiliation. Along with the reorganization went a 5% loan of \$16,000,000, of which the government netted only 72.3%. The low rate of issue is explained not only because of Haiti's low credit rating, but personal inducements of at least \$5,000,000 paid to the Haitian officials who signed the agreement. Money realized from the loan was to be used to settle accounts with the old bank, refund the internal debt, and retire the fiduciary currency, for which purpose some \$2,500,000 was reserved. The loan was secured by a tax of \$1 gold on each 100 pounds of coffee exported and a special 15% surtax on imports. Collection was left in the hands of the government, but service of the public debt was controlled by the bank, the sole depository of the Haitian Government. Only funds surplus after service of the loans of 1875, 1896, and 1910 would be made available to the government.

In 1910 the National Railroad of Haiti was reorganized





also, under the directorship of a colorful financier and adventurer named James P. MacDonald, who allegedly secured valuable concessions by charming Simon's daughter, Celestine. Under the terms of the new contract, the Haitian Government guaranteed 6% interest on the construction bonds of the railroad up to a value of \$35,000 per mile of constructed track. The National City Bank loaned MacDonald \$500,000 to start construction of the railroad, which was to eventually run from Port-au-Prince to Cape Haitian, and the bank received as collateral the bonds of the railroad. National City already owned an interest in Haiti's only other railroad company, the Central Railway of Haiti, operator of the Plaine du Cul de Sac (P.C.S.) Railroad which ran from Port-au-Prince to Lake Sumatre, a distance of about 43 kilometers. The National Railroad concession established a pattern for other foreign investments in Haiti, and government default of guaranteed interest payments would lead to heavy pressures for diplomatic and, eventually, military intervention.

By early 1911, the American Minister could report that "the Simon Government, by its summary executions, merciless slaughters, burlesque of liberty, misappropriation of government funds and other unconstitutional acts, can now be regarded as vile a government as has ever existed in Haiti."<sup>3</sup>

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3. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 835, Feb. 25, 1911, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 3.



That summer, revolutionary activity broke out in the interior of the country, led by Cincinnatus Leconte. For a time the situation was extremely confused, as may be shown by the following sequence of events. In July, the General of Valliere was ordered to the front, and during the night was attacked. He retreated (or more correctly, he ran back) with his soldiers to Valliere. The General from Hinche, who was there with his soldiers, seeing the fleeing troops, mistook them for the advancing enemy and, without making inquiry or attack, set out with his troops for Hinche. Arriving at the outskirts of Hinche, these fleeing troops were, by the General at that place, mistaken for the enemy and, becoming frightened, he ran with his troops to Gonaives where he reported that Hinche had fallen. When the truth became known, the whole affair was thought to be a great joke.<sup>4</sup> Leconte's real advance came late in the month and Simon, convinced that the country was no longer with him, embarked with his family on August 2, 1911. His escape was made under cover of the German flag, the cruiser Bremen landing 40 men. Celestine was shot and slightly wounded on her way to the harbor.

The senior American naval officer at Port-au-Prince received instructions to land forces as necessary to prevent looting and to protect American lives and property.

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<sup>4</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 898, July 18, 1911, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 3.





This proved unnecessary, probably because of a joint warning by the Diplomatic Corps to the Generals commanding revolutionary forces that fighting and disorder would not be permitted in Port-au-Prince. With numerous foreign warships then in the harbor, the warning was heeded and Leconte proclaimed "Chief of the Executive Power" in a relatively quiet ceremony. On August 4, 1911, he was elected president, unanimously, by the legislature. He entered office with open German support, the German business community subscribing an immediate loan to his government of \$200,000.

Leconte's subsequent pro-German leanings were viewed with extreme distrust by the other foreign interests in Haiti, but almost exactly one year later, on August 8, 1912, the President died in an explosion of the powder magazine on the palace grounds. The magazine was a one-story building with a thin brick wall adjoining the palace and a barracks for the palace guard. The explosion was apparently accidental, and was attributed to failure to adequately ventilate a storage chamber for black powder. The disaster occurred at three o'clock in the morning and Leconte was trapped in his bed by debris and burned to death in the fire which followed the explosion. His son, the Minister of Public Works, also perished, along with nearly 100 members of the guard. Syrians, those who remained from the Nord Alexis purges of several years back, were made scapegoats for the incident, and there were scattered cases of looting and pillaging in the city.

Leconte was succeeded by another central figure in the





"Consolidation Scandal," General Tancrede Auguste, whose election occurred with almost indecent haste on the very day of Leconte's death. Auguste's rule, which lasted just nine months, is most remarkable for the events surrounding his funeral and the choice of his successor. It was popularly presumed that his death was caused by slow poisoning and that the party responsible was his mistress. Furniss, a collector of backstairs gossip, reported, however, that the President died in the terminal stages of syphilis (in which case, of course, both versions may be presumed to be correct!).<sup>5</sup>

The funeral service for the fallen president began at 8:30 A.M. on Sunday, May 4, 1913, at the Port-au-Prince Cathedral. The American Minister arrived on time and found the German, French, and British Representatives, in full diplomatic uniform, in the seats assigned to the Diplomatic Corps, immediately in front of those to be occupied by the Cabinet. Senators and Deputies were seated across the aisle, facing the diplomats. The Cathedral soon filled and after a short time the funeral cortege arrived, the body was placed upon a bier, and the Cabinet, surrounded by officers armed with sixteen-shot Winchesters, took their assigned places. As was customary at Te Deum Masses in which Haitian officials took part, most of the army was drawn up in the square facing

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5. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 1217, April 29, 1913, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 29.



the Cathedral. The Mass progressed. The Archbishop delivered a sermon in which he urged that there be no strife in the choosing of the new president, reminding Congress of its duty to the Nation, and expressing the hope that the progress commenced by the dead president would continue.

A procession was then formed by the clergy and church assistants, and at the funeral bier, just inside the front door of the Cathedral, they began to perform the last rites. At that moment, the crack of a rifle resounded in front of the Cathedral, quickly followed by a volley from all sides which threw the whole congregation into panic. Those near the doors attempted to gain the center of the building, while those near the main aisle stampeded in a crazed endeavor to reach the anterooms at the rear of the altar. The German, French, and British colleagues of the American Minister mounted the dias in front of the altar, but Furniss, aware that Haitians more often than not fired in the air rather than at anyone, wisely took shelter in another part of the Cathedral, away from the vicinity of the Cabinet officers. Some shots were fired into the ceiling of the Cathedral by soldiers shouting "a bas le cabinet!"

The firing in the vicinity of the Cathedral did not last very long, but after the first volleys intermittent shots seemed to threaten fresh outbreaks, and it was some time before many dared to venture out. Furniss, advised by friends that there was a growing party in Haiti which





believed that American intervention was the only salvation for the country, and that an attack on the American Minister might bring about that intervention, delayed his departure from the funeral until he was convinced that the neighborhood in the vicinity of the Cathedral was quite deserted. Edging his way to a side door, he then slipped out and ran the three blocks to the Legation.<sup>6</sup>

Tancrede Auguste's death resulted in the "election" of the first civilian president in Haiti's history. Senator Michel Oreste, a prominent lawyer, was chosen by a vote of 72 to 24, shortly after the funeral ceremonies described above. His candidacy was unquestionably advanced by an open distribution of promisory notes to the electors, of from \$300 to \$1,000 payable after the election. One of the first acts of the new administration was the introduction of a law appropriating \$126,000 gold for "extraordinary expenses as a result of the death of President Tancrede Auguste." The law passed handily.<sup>7</sup>

In the summer of 1913, coincident to the recent change of administrations in Washington, Henry W. Furniss was replaced as American Minister by Madison R. Smith. This change was unfortunate, since Mr. Smith proved to be ill-suited for the assignment. During his tenure important negotiations

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929. Furniss to Dept. of State, No. 1223, May 10, 1913, Micro Copy 610, Vol.4. Ibid. No. 1236, May 28, 1913, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 4.



were increasingly placed in the hands of special emissaries from the Wilson administration. Furniss stayed on in Port-au-Prince, in the capacity of private citizen.

In July, 1913, Governor Osborne, a recent appointee as Assistant Secretary of State, secured an agreement from the Oreste government that Mole St. Nicholas would not be sold or leased to any other foreign state. Whether such an agreement had any real worth, given the mercurial condition of Haitian politics, is doubtful. A new revolution was even then underway, nominally led by Davilmar Theodore. Extraordinary measures were taken to shore up the Oreste regime, including the use of USS Nashville to carry government forces to Port-au-Prince in the face of rebellion. The American Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, cabled Smith that "the Department is disposed to do anything proper to support constituted government."<sup>8</sup> The revolt against Oreste carried special significance since it was the first such incident since the announcement of President Wilson's Latin American Policy in his Mobile, Alabama address on October 27, 1913.

In spite of American support, Oreste abdicated on January 27, 1914, and embarked on a German war vessel. The attendant disorders at Port-au-Prince were kept in check by German and American landing parties, USS Montana sending some

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3. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to Smith, Cable, Jan. 22, 1914, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 4.



150 men ashore. The Theodore revolution was derailed en-route to the capital, however, and the Zamor brothers, Orestes and Charles, entered Port-au-Prince on February 7, 1914, at the head of an army of 4,000. Orestes Zamor was elected president the very next day, and Charles Zamor was named Minister of the Interior. Theodore, meanwhile, unfurled the banner of revolution once more by proclaiming himself "Chief of the Executive Power" from his stronghold at the Cape.

When the Zamors came into power they found, not surprisingly, an empty treasury. Further, they were without the means to effect the necessary reforms in the customs service which would ensure them a future source of revenue. The National Bank refused to advance them any funds, for the government was unable to furnish security or collateral of any kind. This enraged the President, and threats were made against the bank, threats that were answered by the French Minister who officially notified the Haitian Minister of Finance that were the threats against the bank put into execution, "the French Government would take very drastic action without regard to the attitude of the United States."<sup>9</sup> This was quickly followed by demands from both France and Germany for participation in the administration of the customs houses of the country.

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9. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Internal Memorandum of the Latin-American Division, March 25, 1914, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.





At this moment a series of interesting exchanges occurred between Secretary of State Bryan and Mr. R.L. Farnham, an employee and later vice-president of the National City Bank of New York. Mr. Farnham also served at this time as president of the National Railroad Company of Haiti, and thus had numerous connections and sources of information in both the railroad and the National Bank of Haiti. Bryan, who seemed to harbor latent distrust of officials in his own department, was on the receiving end of advice passed to him by Farnham throughout the early months of 1914. This advice reached him by letter, by telegram, by telephone, and in personal conversation in several face to face meetings. Mr. Farnham frequently prefaced his communications to the Secretary of State with an expression of hope that they would perhaps present a view of the situation in Haiti "somewhat different from the view one obtains from the regular official reports."<sup>10</sup> The view presented by Farnham described President Zamor as savage, inebriate, and threatening to the National Bank and Railroad. The only solution to the Haitian problem, Farnham stated, was the effective separation of the customs service from politics. His proposal was the further reorganization of the National Bank into a corporation which would be 40% American, 50% French, and 10% German, with the new bank

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10. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Personal letter from R.L.Farnham to William Jennings Bryan, March 11, 1914, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 4.



entrusted with the collection of the customs and the discharge of the public debt. An essential element in Farnham's plan was a guarantee of United States protection of the bank in the execution of its expanded functions.

The Latin-American Affairs Division in the Department of State was less than enthusiastic in support of the proposal, not only because of the minority position of American interests in the prospective corporation, but because an advance guarantee represented a significant departure from the prior policy of deciding such matters on a case by case basis on the merits. Nevertheless, Mr. Farnham, as the personal representative of Secretary Bryan, journeyed to Haiti in July, 1914, and his mission was to secure the consent of the Zamors to his "bank proposal."

Meanwhile, revolutionary activity in the north of Haiti, aided by clandestine movement of arms and munitions across the border from the Dominican Republic, had increased drastically. An interesting sidelight to the struggle, and perhaps an example of "CIA" activity long before there was a CIA, may be seen in the purchase by the Zamors of a three-inch field piece in New York and the hiring of a former U.S. Navy lieutenant and a former Navy gunner's mate to assist in the reduction of a rebel fortification at the northern town of Ouanaminthe. The field piece and the Navy veterans rode to Haiti on the same ship with Mr. Ron Hazeltine, a State Department consular assistant on special detail.





The war in Europe made any reorganization of the National Bank such as envisaged by Farnham improbable, and after several weeks in which he commandeered American warships, gave instructions to State Department representatives, and generally made a nuisance of himself, he returned to the United States. Minister Smith, in the interim, had been relieved by the equally unenergetic Arthur Bailly-Blanchard, and the latter arrived in Haiti with a State Department alternative to the Farnham proposal, a plan for American supervision of the customs through the device of an American-nominated and Haitian-appointed Financial Advisor. The plan was embodied in the draft of a proposed convention with Haiti which followed closely the lines of that in effect with the Dominican Republic. At this same time USS Hancock and 800 marines were ordered to Guantanamo to be held in readiness should they be needed in Haiti.

The Zamors were apparently agreeable to the convention as a last desperate measure to remain in power. They insisted, however, that the United States land its forces as a preliminary step to negotiating the treaty, in order to take the edge off opposition charges that they were preparing to "sell" their country to the Americans. Bryan, however, remained firm in his contention that the plan could only be adopted on the prior "request" of the Haitian Government for friendly American assistance. In this impasse the internal situation in Haiti steadily worsened. Political prisoners were paraded through the streets of Cape Haitian



and shot amid cries of "Viva Zamor!" and opposition leaders told Consul Livingston that they would rather see themselves and their country perish ten times over than remain in control of the present administration. In August the government abrogated its agreement with the bank and brought suit against the National Railroad, steps which brought cries of outrage from Mr. Farnham and stern warnings from Secretary Bryan. In September soldiers in Port-au-Prince threatened the Zamors with death unless salaries were paid, and they were then given permission to take food from the markets. The country tottered on the brink of absolute anarchy.

On October 19, 1914, the USS Tacoma, with the consent of all the foreign consuls, sent its landing party ashore at Cape Haitian to protect foreign interests in the face of the imminent fall of the city to the revolution, and a few days later Charles Zamor agreed to guarantee "to have the views of the United States Government adopted" in exchange for effective assistance in triumphing over the revolution.<sup>11</sup> Robert Lansing, the Acting Secretary of State, sent an urgent request to the White House for instructions concerning Haiti, and shortly thereafter the following cable was sent to Bailly-Blanchard in Port-au-Prince:

Transport Hancock with eight hundred marines has been ordered to proceed to Port-au-Prince immed-

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1. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Bailly-Blanchard to Dept. of State, Cable, Oct. 25, 1914, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.





lately with orders to land men at your request. Hancock is due at Port-au-Prince evening of October 30. Battleship Kansas from Mexican waters has also been ordered to Port-au-Prince. Department is still contemplating convention along lines of its instructions of July 2nd. At the same time it is desired to reach agreement for a fair election to be held within a specified time similar to Department's action in Dominican Republic. Department feels it advisable to negotiate with Zamor brothers and if President Zamor has already left the country wishes every protection offered Charles Zamor now reported refugee in Consulate. Upon arrival Hancock you will at your discretion request Commanding Officer to take charge of Port-au-Prince and will restore Charles Zamor to his cabinet functions. Further instructions will be sent shortly. Report by cable.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the decision to intervene had been taken, at the belated "request" of Charles Zamor. The American response, however, was not taken in time, for Lensing's cable crossed with one from Bailly-Blanchard which reported a general uprising in Port-au-Prince during which the Zamors had fled, the President to a Dutch vessel and Charles to diplomatic asylum in the French Legation. When the Hancock and its marines arrived on the morning of October 31, 1914, absolute calm reigned in the city, and no occasion could be found for the landing of troops. On November 6, 1914, Davilmar Theore arrived in the capital amid the ringing of bells and the firing of a Presidential salute. The next day he was elected "constitutionally" the President of the Republic.

Secretary Bryan, once more at the helm of the State

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2. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Acting Secretary of State to Bailly-Blanchard, Cable, Oct. 9, 1914, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.





Department, cabled instructions for the American Minister to advise Theodore that the United States would recognize him as a "provisional" President when he had named a three-man commission to go to Washington to negotiate a convention or conventions covering: (1) American control of the Haitian customs service, (2) settlement of all matters outstanding between the Government of Haiti and the railroad, (3) settlement of questions outstanding between the Government of Haiti and the bank, (4) agreement by Haiti to give full protection to all foreign interests in Haiti, (5) agreement by Haiti never to lease any Haitian territory at Mole St. Nicholas or anywhere else in the country to any European Government for use as a naval coaling station, and (6) appointment of a Haitian commission empowered to sign a protocol for use in settlement by arbitration of pending claims of American citizens against Haiti.<sup>13</sup>

The Theodore Government resisted Bryan's demands, and made a counter-proposal to grant Americans special privileges in mining, etc. Bryan replied that what was required to attract American capital was peace and stability, not special privilege. Strongly pressed, an attempt was made to open the question of customs control, but on December 3, the Haitian Minister for Foreign Affairs while undergoing questioning on the subject was physically attacked in the

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13. U.S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to Bailly-Blanchard, Cable, Nov. 12, 1914, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.



Senate Chambers and accused of trying to "sell" Haiti to the United States. He departed amidst the wildest excitement and later submitted his resignation. The Theodore administration next threatened to forcibly remove funds from the National Bank.

In this crisis, Mr. Farnham hurried to Washington and in a meeting with Bryan secured his consent for an extraordinary transfer of \$500,000 in gold - part of the funds reserved under terms of the bank's contract for retirement of the old Haitian paper currency - from the vaults of the National Bank to the National City Bank in New York. Because this measure was expected to meet with strong resistance from the Haitian Government, arrangements were made to effect the transfer using an American naval vessel and American marines. The USS Machias was ordered to Port-au-Prince and on December 17, 1914, a party of eight marines armed with stout canes and concealed revolvers transported the gold from the bank to the Machias without incident. The American officer commanding the operation wisely chose the Haitian siesta hour for the transfer and the gold passed through nearly deserted streets on its way to the harbor. Both the American Minister and the local manager of the bank strongly protested Secretary Bryan's decision in this matter.

In mid-January, 1915, having refused recognition of the Theodore Government, President Wilson decided on a new initiative and wrote to his Secretary of State, Mr. Bryan, as follows:





... The more I think about that situation the more I am convinced that it is our duty to take immediate action there such as we took in Santo Domingo. I mean to send a commissioner there who will seek and obtain an interview with the leaders of the various contending factions of the Republic and say to them as firmly and definitely as is consistent with courtesy and kindness that the United States cannot consent to stand by and permit revolutionary conditions constantly to exist there. They might, as in Santo Domingo, insist upon an agreement for a popular election under our supervision and be told that the result of that election would be upheld by the United States to the utmost.

Is not this your judgement?<sup>14</sup>

Apparently that was Mr. Bryan's judgement, and he recommended that Governor John Franklin Fort, Mr. Charles Cogswell Smith (both of whom had recently acted as commissioners to Santo Domingo) and Mr. Arthur Bailly-Blanchard comprise the Haitian Commission. The President agreed.

The situation in Haiti, however, was precarious and it looked as if the Theodore Government might fall at any moment. The leader of the new revolution was Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, and his activities in the vicinity of Cape Haitian caused Consul Livingston to request the presence of a naval vessel. Rear Admiral William B. Caperton, Commander Cruiser Squadron, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, arrived there with USS Washington on January 23, 1915. Shortly after his arrival the Admiral, in company with Livingston, called on Sam and the meeting was a memorable one. Years later, Caperton would recall the "very gorgeous black gentleman

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4. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, Memorandum, January 13, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 6.



arrayed like a head bellhop at the Waldorf" who greeted them at the door of Sam's headquarters to direct them through a room and up a pair of steps. The black gentleman then suddenly disappeared, to appear again, still resplendent, at the head of the stairs where he took their caps and gloves and ushered them into a large reception room, saying that the General would be pleased to see them in a moment. He then disappeared again. While the Admiral waited, a large portrait caught his eye. It seemed familiar. When General Sam appeared, the Admiral was surprised to recognize him as the bellhop, only this time he had discarded his coat for a more elaborate one and an enormous sword clanked round his heels. A glance at the portrait on the wall convinced him; it also was Guillaume Sam.<sup>15</sup>

Through Livingston Admiral Caperton was informed of the usual course of Haitian revolutions, and in his interview with General Sam he extracted a promise that as Sam advanced with his army to Port-au-Prince there would be no looting of the towns along the way. The Admiral also arranged to have naval officers meet Sam at each major stop on his march to the capital, to remind him of his promise. He then departed Cape Haitian with the Washington and proceeded to Port-au-Prince, arriving there on January 27, 1915, to discover a tense situation involving the American schooner

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5. Admiral William B. Caperton, "Activities While in Command of Cruiser Squadron, U. S. Atlantic Fleet and Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet" (Unpublished manuscript), The Admiral William B. Caperton Papers, MSS Division, Library of Congress.





Alice Pendleton and the Haitian Government.

President Theodore had declared a blockade of the ports of northern Haiti, but was unable to enforce it because the Haitian naval vessels were at Port-au-Prince without coal or funds to purchase any. The Alice Pendleton, meanwhile, had been at Port-au-Prince since January 11 with 600 tons of coal contracted for, but not yet paid for, by the Haitian Government. When Caperton arrived he found the American schooner lying alongside a wharf, between the Haitian gunboats Nord Alexis and Pacifique. In view of the financial condition of the Theodore Government, its urgent and vital need for funds, the lack of coal for the gunboats, the exposed position of the Alice Pendleton, the approach of the revolutionists, and the generally insecure condition at Port-au-Prince, the Admiral decided to ready his landing party and to keep in constant touch with the American Minister.

On January 29, 1915, the Theodore Government published a proclamation changing the depository for customs and tax receipts from the National Bank to such business houses or banks as it might designate, and that same day, payment having been advanced, the Alice Pendleton began discharging its coal to the Haitian gunboats. Renewed threats were directed at the National Bank to forcibly remove funds already on deposit there, and these threats were countered by a strong warning issued through the American Minister, a warning underscored by the arrival, on January 31, of the





USS Montana with 650 marines. The decision was made, however, to await the arrival of the Haitian Commission, and in the interim the Theodore Government finally fell, on February 22, 1915. The President embarked on a Dutch ship and Sam arrived in Port-au-Prince to the ritualistic ringing of bells and cheering of the populace, followed by the equally ritualistic election, on March 4, 1915. Governor Fort and Mr. Smith landed the next day.

President Wilson's Haitian Commission accomplished nothing in a ten-day sojourn in Port-au-Prince. Governor Fort found his accommodations unsanitary and unsafe, and complained bitterly of the lack of a U. S. warship in the harbor during part of the Commission's stay. Brief meetings were held with the newly elected President and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, but these ended on a sour note when the Minister asked to see the Commission's credentials and they could not be produced - Secretary Bryan having neglected to provide any. After a week in the country, Governor Fort reported that the Commission was in full possession of the facts and stated that a longer stay would be unproductive. He and Smith sailed from Port-au-Prince on March 15, 1915, on the USS Nashville. Minister Bailly-Blanchard did not accompany them, and apparently did not anticipate Bryan's cable, after Fort had reported to President Wilson, which stated, in part: "The President regrets to learn that the American Minister to Haiti has disregarded the instructions given him by this Government and has not only failed to



perform his duty as a member of the Commission but has on the contrary, used his influence to obstruct the work entrusted to the Commission. A full and immediate explanation of his attitude and the reasons therefore is requested."<sup>16</sup> This severe reprimand apparently was more the result of Governor Fort's ill-temper than anything done or left undone by Bailly-Blanchard, for after a hasty trip to Washington and explanations, the American Minister was returned to his post. His absence would cause him to miss, however, a moment of high drama in Haitian history.

In retrospect, the Fort mission was very poorly timed, and it is doubtful that even the most skilled negotiator, which the Governor patently was not, could have achieved President Wilson's ends. Having just assumed office, Sam had a breathing spell, albeit a short one, before the next revolution began. His most pressing financial problems were eased by large cash loans from his uncle, ex-President Simon Sam, and by a lucky stroke the man he considered his chief potential rival, Orestes Zamor, was arrested shortly after entering Haiti from the Dominican Republic and thrown into prison at Port-au-Prince.

President Wilson was not of a mind to wait for the development of a new Haitian crisis, however, and chose a new and more capable emissary in Paul Fuller, Jr., a member of

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6. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to Bailly-Blanchard, Cable, March 26, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.





a prominent New York law firm. Fuller, carrying credentials as Presidential Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, arrived in Port-au-Prince in May, 1915, and immediately set about to negotiate a treaty which skirted the sensitive issue of American financial control. He had detailed instructions from the President himself. The most memorable and, in the light of later American experience, most poignant part of those instructions was the admonition that "only an honest and efficient government deserves support. The Government of the United States could not justify the expenditure of money or the sacrifice of American lives in support of any other kind of government."<sup>17</sup> Such a government, of course, did not exist, and had never existed in Haiti.

Fuller's draft convention provided for the posting of an American Minister Plenipotentiary to Haiti who would advise the President of Haiti "as to such matters as effect the honest and efficient administration of the Government, the President of Haiti agreeing that he will follow the advice so given to the extent of requiring honesty and efficiency in officials and of removing those found to be dishonest and inefficient."<sup>18</sup> (President Wilson later

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7. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, President Woodrow Wilson to Paul Fuller, Jr., May 6, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.

8. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Haiti, 1910-1929, Paul Fuller to Secretary of State, Cable, May 22, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.



directed that "dishonest and inefficient" be changed to read "dishonest or inefficient.") The question raised by the section quoted is when does advice cease to be advice and become something else? It would seem that that point is reached when it is agreed to follow, in advance, the "advice" given.

The draft convention contained four specific agreements in addition to that cited above. These were: (1) The Government of the United States of America will protect the Republic of Haiti from outside attack, and from the aggression of any foreign power, and to that end will employ such forces of the army and the navy of the United States as may be necessary, (2) the Government of the United States of America will aid the Government of the Republic of Haiti to suppress insurrection from within and will give effective support by the employment of the armed forces of the United States army and navy to the extent needed, (3) the President of the Republic of Haiti covenants that no rights, privileges or facilities of any description whatsoever will be granted, sold, leased or otherwise accorded directly or indirectly by the Government of Haiti concerning the occupation or use of the Mole St. Nicholas to any other foreign Government or to a national or the nationals of any other foreign Government, (4) the President of the Republic of Haiti covenants that within six months from the signing of this Convention, the Government of Haiti will enter into an arbitration agreement for the settlement of such claims





as American citizens or other foreigners may have against the Government of Haiti, such arbitration agreement to provide for the equal treatment of all foreigners to the end that the people of Haiti may have the benefit of competition between the nationals of all countries.<sup>19</sup>

Two major issues confronted Fuller in his discussions with the Haitian Government. The first of these concerned recognition, for though a special representative of the United States was formally engaged in treaty negotiations with the Sam Government, that Government had not been recognized by the United States. Sam insisted on recognition before signing any treaty, and President Wilson just as steadfastly insisted on a treaty before granting recognition. On May 28, 1915, however, Bryan cabled that "the President authorizes recognition before signing provided you have his [Sam's] written promise to sign treaty immediately after recognition."<sup>20</sup> The real stumbling block in the negotiations, however, concerned the terms under which American military forces would be permitted to operate in Haiti. It was the contention of the Sam Government that American forces in Haiti would have to withdraw at the first demand of the constitutional authorities. To this Fuller would not agree, stating that such a provision would in effect place the armed

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19. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Haiti, 1910-1929, Paul Fuller to Secretary of State, Cable, May 22, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.

20. Ibid., Secretary of State to Paul Fuller, Cable, May 28, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.





forces of the United States at the beck and call of a foreign government. Sam replied that while he himself did not doubt the good intentions of the United States, intervention was a very sensitive subject with the Haitian people, and his counter-proposal on troop employment was therefore a final one. On June 5, 1915, Fuller left Port-au-Prince, the convention unsigned.

Meanwhile, revolution had broken out once more in the north, this time under the eccentric leadership of Dr. Rosalvo Bobo, a former minister in the Theodore government. In June he took temporary control of Cape Haitian, looted the customs house, and paraded the heads of several government officials through the streets. Threats were made to forcibly remove refugees from the French consulate, and 50 sailors were promptly landed from the French cruiser Des-ertes. Convinced that there was a widespread conspiracy against him, Sam ordered sweeping arrests in Port-au-Prince and nearly 200 opponents, many of them from the best Haitian families, were thrown into the National Prison. Foreign legations and consulates, with the exception of the American, were again filled to overflowing with those seeking asylum. The deteriorating political situation, and more particularly the landing of French sailors at the Cape, resulted in the ordering of Commander Cruiser Squadron, then in Mexican waters, to proceed at once to Haiti.

Thus it was that USS Washington, after a midnight provisioning, got underway at the most unlikely hour of 2:25



A.M. on June 26, from Progreso, Mexico, and steaming on 16 boilers headed east across the Caribbean. After a brief fuel stop at Guantanamo Bay, the armored cruiser continued on to Cape Haitian, arriving there at 9:27 in the morning on July 1, 1915.

Within ten minutes after anchoring, a salute of 13 guns was exchanged with the Descartes which, as Admiral Caperton learned, had withdrawn its landing party a week earlier. The French Commanding Officer placed himself at the Admiral's disposal, but in keeping with his instructions, Caperton simply thanked him for his services and informed him that he would henceforth assume responsibility for the safeguarding of foreign interests at the Cape.

With Consul Livingston the Admiral next conferred with the French Consul and the commander of the Haitian forces in the city. He then announced that he would not permit any fighting in the city, and that any battles between the two contending parties would have to be fought "well clear of town." This was necessary, he said, to carry out his orders to ensure the protection of foreign life and property, and he stated that he was prepared to land United States forces if that should be required. He further proclaimed the impartiality of the United States in the existing political difficulties. A copy of the Admiral's proclamation on this matter was delivered to Dr. Bobo, then encamped on the outskirts of the city.

On July 4, the Washington was joined at the Cape by the





gunboat Eagle, which arrived from Guantanamo after an overnight anchorage at Port-au-Prince, where conditions seemed, for the moment, stable.

On July 9, one officer and twenty-nine marines were landed by Washington to quell a disturbance in the town and they remained there to set up a patrol of the streets. Small detachments were posted at the American consulate, the railroad station, and the telegraph office. From then until July 27, the two American ships maintained a close watch on the threatening situation at Cape Haitian. Eagle took on coal and certain provisions, including: "48 garters, Peary isle, 24 mouthpieces for clay pipes, 5,000 Melanchrino cigarettes, 432 Hershey almond bars, 72 packages of playing cards," all carefully noted in the deck log. A marine private on Washington was sentenced to a bad conduct discharge and a loss of pay in the amount of \$68.80 for using excessively obscene language (brilliantly recorded for posterity) to the Corporal of the Guard, and on the same ship a lowly coal passer was awarded a Deck Court Martial for "refusing to obey a lawful order, in that he did, when ordered to get a bucket of drinking water for the fireroom watch, refuse to do so."<sup>21</sup> Discipline within the Cruiser Squadron was strict.

At about this same time, the Squadron legal officer probably prepared, for the Cruiser Squadron Commander, the

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U. S., National Archives, Record Group 24, USS Washington and USS Eagle deck logs, July 1915.



following untitled, undated memorandum.

Our duty in protecting American interests is partly covered by [Navy] Regulations, Articles 1646-1647-1648-1649-1650.

Under these articles we are duty bound to confer with the diplomatic Consular representatives in all cases where injury to the United States or to its citizens thereof is committed or threatened, in violation of the principles of international law or treaty rights.

The only treaties now existing between the United States and Haiti are:

- (a) A treaty of citizenship
- (b) A treaty of extradition
- (c) A treaty of arbitration

We have a right to land a force only on our initiative when the rights of self-preservation are involved. In the case of the United States it includes the protection of the State, its honor, and its possessions; that is, for example, the Consulate and its records and the lives and property of United States citizens against the arbitrary violence, actual or impending, whereby the State or its citizens may suffer irreparable injury.

If we do land a force for this purpose, it must only be used as a last resort and then only to the extent which is absolutely necessary to accomplish the end required.

In all cases where forces are landed, especially where the local authorities are unable to give adequate protection to life and property, the assent of such authorities, or of some one of them, shall first be obtained, if it can be done without prejudice to the interests involved.<sup>22</sup>

In view of the circumstances surrounding Admiral Caperton's later armed landing at Port-au-Prince, it is important to note that apparently his sole authority for taking that action was drawn from the general instructions contained in Navy Regulations. Years later he would affirm that in testimony before a Senate Select Committee investigating the intervention, and his

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2. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject file, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45.



own operation plan for the Caribbean deployment contains the statement that "the Commander of the Cruiser Squadron had no orders except to proceed to San Domingo City, Port-au-Prince, Havana, and the east coast of Mexico, for the purpose of acquainting himself with the political situation in these countries."<sup>23</sup> His frequent complaint in official communications to the Navy Department during his operations in Haitian waters was the silence of the Department concerning American policy toward Haiti. Admiral Caperton's use of the forces at his disposal, though no doubt influenced by discussions with American diplomatic and consular representatives, was accordingly predicated largely on his professional judgement and interpretation of his duty to safeguard American life and property. Such latitude, extending even to armed intervention in the affairs of a foreign state, is almost inconceivable in the context of modern-day communications, contingency planning, and strict civilian control of the military.

The Admiral's attempt to apply "Marquis of Queensbury" rules to Haitian revolutionary activity, relatively successful in the earlier Sam revolution and in moderating Bobo's terrorism at the Cape, failed to forestall the savage climax of Haiti's era of ephemeral governments, which was played out in the capital, Port-au-Prince, on July 27-28, 1915, at a rare moment when no foreign warship stood guard in the harbor.

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U. S. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45.





The following narrative has been pieced together from several contemporary sources, but draws principally on the official report of the American Chargé d'Affaires in Port-au-Prince at the fall of the Sam Government, Mr. R.B. Davis, Jr.<sup>24</sup>

From what has been written thus far about Haitian revolutions, it may be seen that they ordinarily followed a well defined pattern with certain variations brought about by the unexpected death in office of the President. An "army" of dissidents would gather in a place remote from the capital, usually in the north, and after an almost leisurely procession to Port-au-Prince, arrive at the seat of government to find the old administration embarked or in diplomatic asylum. The revolutionary army's General would then be proclaimed the new President of the Republic. This was the sequence Admiral Caperton expected the Bobo revolution to follow, but early in the morning on July 27, 1915, a group of 50 or more revolutionaries, led by Charles de Delva, suddenly broke their asylum in foreign legations in Port-au-Prince and attacked the presidential palace, having secured the control of the machine guns commanding the palace grounds. This they apparently accomplished by enrolling sympathizers in the palace guard, over a period of several months. In the attack the guard was routed, with a loss of perhaps 50 killed and some 200 wounded.

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U. S. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, R.B. Davis, Jr. to Secretary of State, Memorandum, January 12, 1916, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 6.



President Sam and several of his officers succeeded in barricading themselves in the palace, but it soon became evident that the revolutionists were determined to burn them out. Several smaller buildings on the palace grounds were put to the torch and oil had been sent for to use in firing the palace itself. Taking advantage of heavy smoke from the burning buildings and temporary confusion in the revolutionary ranks, Sam made a sudden dash for an iron gate in the wall which separated the palace grounds from the French Legation compound. With admirable presence of mind he brought with him from the palace the huge key which opened the gate, but the iron lock had rusted shut. His potential assassins hard on his heels, he then scaled the 20-foot wall in a burst of superhuman energy. At the top of the wall a shot from his pursuers struck him in the leg, and he fell to the ground on the French Legation side of the wall. There he was assisted into the Legation by Charles Zamor, who for some months had himself found asylum in the Legation from Sam's own police.

Meanwhile, at the National Prison, a wholesale slaughter of 167 political prisoners had been carried out, apparently in Sam's prior instructions to General Oscar Etienne should (Sam) be driven from the palace. Among those brutally killed to death in the prison courtyard was ex-President Restes Zamor, the brother of Charles. The prisoners, almost without exception, were members of élite Port-au-Prince families. When news of what had happened leaked out, the





streets became filled with enraged and grieving people. General Oscar, who had taken refuge in the Dominican Legation following the massacre, was discovered there by the father of three boys slain at the prison. Oscar was dragged into the street, shot and mutilated, and his body left lying in the gutter before the Legation. So intense was the feeling of the people against Oscar that no one could be found to carry his body away for burial and it lay where it fell, to be spat upon by passers-by, until the following day when it was saturated with oil and burned on the spot.

In the meantime an enormous crowd of hysterical people had gathered in the vicinity of the National Prison. Everywhere one looked little processions could be seen, led by two men carrying on a plank the body of one of the victims, followed by friends and relatives whose curses against the President mingled with those of the people who stood in the streets and watched. It is not clear just how it became generally known that the massacre was the result of an order given by Sam, but there seemed to be a conviction in everyone's mind that the President was personally responsible for the death of the prisoners. The French Minister, Mr. Girard, himself a mulatto, sent urgent requests to the American and British Chargés d'Affaires that they come to the French Legation and render such assistance as they could should an attempt be made to forcibly remove the President. Minister Girard was gravely concerned for the safety of his wife and two young daughters, who were then with him at the Legation.



Both Chargés sent despatches requesting the presence of warships, and proceeded at once to the French Legation. There they found that the President had been joined in asylum by his wife and several of their small children, the Ministers of Finance and Foreign Relations, several officers of the army, and numerous servants. President Sam was in a perfect frenzy of fear, creeping about the house like a hunted animal, so terror stricken that when he passed an open window he would crawl on all fours for fear that someone on the outside would see him and shoot him. During the afternoon disorganized mobs entered the Legation grounds on several occasions and were, with great difficulty, dispersed. Toward evening, however, the street outside the Legation became nearly deserted.

Just before nightfall a friend of the two Ministers seeking refuge in the Legation came and after some conversation all three men departed. That the Ministers chose the hazards of passing unharmed through the city rather than the safety of the Legation convinced the American Chargé, Mr. Davis, that there were plans afoot to enter the Legation that night and remove the President. He and his British colleague, Mr. Kohn, agreed to stay with Minister Girard throughout the night.

In spite of their apprehensions, the long night passed uneventfully and through mid-morning of the next day, July 8, absolute calm prevailed in the city. Things seemed so quiet that Davis decided to risk a quick visit to the Amer-





ican Legation to see if a reply to his despatch of the day before had been received. The British Chargé agreed to await Davis' return before making a similar check at his Legation. About an hour after Davis left, however, Mr. Kohn, convinced that the continued quiet in the city made his presence at the French Legation unnecessary, also departed, without waiting for Davis' return.

In the meantime a doctor had been brought to the Legation to treat the President's leg wound, which was determined to be not serious. The wound was dressed and treated with a liberal application of pungent iodoform. Sam then returned to his hiding place within the Legation, the Minister's private bathroom which led off the second floor master bedroom. The door to the bathroom was cleverly concealed, at Madame Girard's suggestion, by placing the Minister's huge, high-backed bedstead in front of it. The Girards then retired to the Legation sitting room, which ran completely through, from front to back, the large house. Both doors to the sitting room were unbarred and open, so that the front and back gates to the Legation grounds, at the end of very long gravel driveways, could be constantly observed.

Unbeknown to the French Minister, however, a mob of some 80 men had already entered an adjoining property at the side of the Legation and were even then scaling the wall. They were on the Legation porch in an instant and despite frantic efforts by the Girards to bar their doors





the men forced their way in and demanded that the French Minister surrender the person of the President. Girard courageously refused. A quick search of the Legation failed to uncover Sam's hiding place. A servant, who had the misfortune to resemble the President, was almost killed on the spot before being able to persuade his attackers of his true identity. Once more Sam's surrender was demanded of Girard, and once more it was refused. A second and more thorough search began, and it is possible that this too might have failed, were it not for the strong scent of iodoform which at last betrayed the presence of the wounded President. The Minister's bed was roughly shoved aside, the heretofore concealed door broken down, and Sam, slashed several times in the face, dragged by his heels down the stairs and out of the Legation before the eyes of his wife and children. Loudly screaming his innocence of any connection with the massacre at the prison, he was kicked and shoved the length of the driveway. At one point he hooked his arm through the spokes of a parked carriage in a vain attempt to free himself from his captors. A blow from a club broke his arm and he was forced nearer the gate, beyond which he could now see a raging, ranting mob. The gate, of iron and spiked at the top, was locked and Sam's abductors attempted to throw him over the gate to the impatient mob on the other side. His body caught, partially impaled, on the spikes at the top, and from there he was clawed to the ground outside, in a gathering crescendo of screams.



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Mr. Davis, meanwhile, had reached the American Legation where he read a telegram stating that the Washington would arrive in Port-au-Prince that morning, and in fact he could already make out the lines of the warship on the horizon as it prepared to enter the harbor. As he retraced his path to the French Legation, his ear caught one terrific howl of fury from that direction and he quickened his pace, convinced that something terrible was on the verge of happening. As he turned into the street which ran by the French Legation, his way was suddenly blocked by a mass of people which completely filled the street from wall to wall. He could see that something or somebody was on the ground in the center of the crowd just before the gate of the Legation, and a moment later a man disentangled himself from the crowd and rushed howling by him, with a severed hand from which the blood was dripping, the thumb of which he had stuck in his mouth. Behind that man came other men, with the feet, the other hand, the head, and other parts of the fallen President displayed on poles, each followed by a mob of screaming men and women. The trunk of Sam's mutilated body came last, at the end of a rope as it was dragged through the street.

This was the procession viewed in part by Admiral Caperton through binoculars from the bridge of the Washington as the armored cruiser anchored in the harbor of the Haitian capital.





## Part Two

### Intervention and Occupation

"In searching history one finds the stories of certain small nations which other powerful nations have only been able to overcome by practically annihilating them. This task has always proved long and difficult, and in the end proved a fatal tax on the conquerors. In view of this it would be prudent, very prudent, not to undertake such a task in the twentieth century, and under the eyes of the Civilized World. And not only because this task would today as well as yesterday, be long, difficult and in the end of fatal cost to the one attempting it, but because now more than ever it would be ignoble, base and criminal."

- Rosalvo Bobo, Graduate in Law and Medicine at Paris, Minister of the Interior, Port-au-Prince, December 14, 1914.



## II. The Establishment of American Control.

For foreigners the situation was extremely critical. The foreign legations, up to this time, had never been invaded, but the invasion of the Dominican Legation, where General Oscar had taken refuge, followed the next day by the invasion of the French, took away this last safeguard against violence from the natives. The ignorant classes, having seen these legations violated with apparently no evil results to the invaders, could not be expected to respect their inviolability as they had in the past; and as a result there remained no place of safety, nor was there any Haitian authority which could be looked to for protection.

- Robert Beale Davis, Jr., American Chargé d'Affaires, Port-au-Prince.

The Washington anchored shortly before noon on July 28, 1915, and as soon as a boat could be lowered an armed party was sent ashore to escort the French Minister and the American and British Chargés for a hurried meeting with Admiral Caperton on board the flagship. All of the diplomats urged the immediate landing of an American force to restore some degree of sanity to the chaotic Haitian capital and to safeguard foreign interests. Minister Girard was particularly importunate, stating his fears for his wife and daughters, alone and defenseless in the French Legation. At the conclusion of this meeting, the Admiral was convinced of the necessity for sending his forces ashore without delay, but he still took the time to formally notify General Polynice and several other members of a hastily formed Committee of Public Safety ashore of his intentions. General Polynice, it may be stated in passing, was the executioner of Gen-



eral Oscar.

The French Minister and the two Chargés left the ship at 4:10 P.M. and, perhaps as much for the desired effect ashore as for protocol, a 17 gun salute was fired in honor of the senior diplomat. At 4:50 P.M. Washington's landing party, consisting of two companies of marines and three companies of seamen, all under the command of Captain George Van Orden, USMC, was landed at Bizoton, a defunct naval yard about a mile southeast of the center of Port-au-Prince. The total strength of the landing party was 340 officers and men. The marines had of course been sent ashore on numerous earlier occasions, both in Haiti and in Mexico, but the bluejacket battalion had never before been landed either for duty or for drill.

The flagship's guns were manned during the landing, but fire support was not called for by Captain Van Orden. He split his landing force into two parallel columns and marched them into the center of the city, disarming all Haitian soldiers encountered on the way. Scattered shots were exchanged and two Haitians were killed and ten wounded. There were no American casualties. A considerable amount of arms and ammunition was seized. Guards were posted at the foreign legations and, at nightfall, bivouacs were made. Sanitary conditions at the principal bivouac area, the central market, are recorded in a report made to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery by the medical officer who accompanied the landing party ashore.





... Against the protest of the Medical Officer the Seamen's Battalion and the ship's company of Marines were made to bivouac in the filthiest and most unsanitary place in the city. The floor of the marketplace, a square building roofed-over but open at the sides except for a low brick wall, was covered with filth; triturated dried human excrement; dust fouled with spit; fruit skins; banana stems; and in one place a shallow pool of foul smelling water was present. The whole place was pervaded with a heavy odor, worse than a stable, and more like an open air privy. The posts, inside, which supported the roof, smelt heavily of dried urine. (It is a habit of these Haitian negroes to urinate and defecate wherever they find a convenient place.) It was in this place that the men were obliged to stay overnight and, in fact, until the middle of the following afternoon. The sailors, of course, had no cots to lie on. Cots for the Marines arrived about 2 A.M. The majority of the men got no sleep that night, preferring to sit on the curb or against the wall rather than lie in the filth. In this place were absolutely no facilities for the men to police themselves. There was no urinal or privy accessible in the vicinity, neither was there any water obtainable for any purpose.

Water from the ship arrived about 5 A.M. The distribution of it was not properly supervised by a petty-officer. Breakers were rolled on the dirty floor and subsequently opened with only a mechanical cleansing around the bungholes. The hospital corps endeavored to supervise further handling of the breakers, propping them off the floor, and sterilizing around the bungholes with carbolic acid....<sup>1</sup>

Sanitation, the sailors were quick to learn, was not a Haitian long suit. The city water system, of French colonial vintage, was contaminated at hundreds of points where water mains had been broken into to form crude public "wells" which then received the plentiful effluvia from the streets. Pigs, chickens, and ducks roamed the town almost at will,

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1. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45. P.A. Surgeon R. Cuthbertson to Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, undated Report (August? 1915).



and a foul-smelling gutter in front of the American Legation was a favorite wallowing place for hogs nominally the property of the Haitian President. The water in the harbor itself was so bad that most ships' captains refused to use it even for scrubbing decks.

Sanitary conditions ashore were not the only problems faced by the naval landing party, however. Their equipment was grossly inadequate. Packs (quickly dubbed "mankillers") cut into shoulders. Sailors' shoes were not designed for long marches, and their uniforms (sailor whites, dyed brown) did not hold up well under rough use. They suffered from insects and crawling vermin. Their most regrettable weakness was their lack of training for the duties they were assigned ashore. This was underscored on the night of January 29, when two members of the bluejacket battalion were gunned down in the street outside their bivouac by their own shipmates firing wildly in the dark. The arrival of additional marines permitted the gradual withdrawal of the sailors and their return to more customary duties afloat. The USS Jason brought a company of marines from Guantanamo on July 29, the USS Connecticut landed the Second Marine Regiment on August 4, and USS Tennessee arrived with the First Marine Regiment on August 15. This brought the total marine strength in Haiti to 88 officers and 1941 enlisted. The last of Washington's bluejacket battalion was embarked on August 18, 1915.

Throughout the initial period of the occupation, there





was little fighting. Admiral Caperton at first had the grudging support of the Committee of Public Safety, itself pledged to the candidacy of Dr. Bobo, who, as the leader of the most recent revolution, was considered to be Sam's logical successor. The Admiral's Chief of Staff, Captain Edward L. Beach, who represented the Cruiser Squadron Commander in political negotiations ashore, was not impressed with Bobo's qualifications for high office, and he passed his observations to the Admiral who in turn sent them on to Washington where they eventually reached President Wilson in virtually the same language couched by Captain Beach. Bobo was pictured as an inflammatory and perhaps deranged self-seeker, with decided anti-American sentiments. This assessment of Bobo was not kept a secret by the Admiral or his Chief of Staff and led to an early and open break with Bobo's supporters in the Committee.

The landing of American forces had been decided upon by roughly 4 P.M. on July 28, and the landing itself was accomplished less than an hour later. Admiral Caperton informed the Navy Department of his action immediately, but Washington's orders to land were not received on board the flagship until almost six hours after American intervention had become a fait accompli. There is little doubt, however, that intervention had already been decided upon by President Wilson, and that American policy was to accomplish that intervention at the first favorable opportunity. Paul Fuller's report to the President concerning his unsuccessful attempt



to negotiate a treaty was quite specific in its recommendation to land marines for the purpose of establishing an honest and efficient administration. He viewed that as a necessary first step in securing a treaty along the lines of the Platt Amendment, and stated his belief that only an American occupation could effect a permanent change in Haiti's intolerable political condition.<sup>2</sup> The Division of Latin American Affairs fully concurred with Fuller's report. President Wilson's comment on the report was that "it gives me a great deal of concern. Action is evidently necessary and no doubt it would be a mistake to postpone it long."<sup>3</sup> At this same moment there was decided diplomatic pressure from France for American intervention. The French Embassy in Washington informed the Wilson administration that it was urgently desired that the United States take energetic action in Haiti; that if she did, France would look with approval on her action and be willing to support her in every way provided that a just recognition of French claims in Haiti be made; that should the action taken not be energetic, but composed of half-way measures, France would not look on it with such approval.<sup>4</sup>

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2. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Paul Fuller, Jr., to President Woodrow Wilson, Report, June 14, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.

3. Ibid., President Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, Memorandum, July 2, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 5.

4. Ibid., Internal Memorandum of Division of Latin American Affairs, February 26, 1927, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 20.



In spite of what has been recounted above, Admiral Caperton's landing of American forces in Haiti caught the Wilson administration essentially unprepared. The belated order from Washington to land stated that foreign interests should be protected and that the representatives of England and France were to be informed of that fact and asked not to land forces of their own. On July 29, Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, that "under no circumstances should he [Caperton] withdraw American marines from Haitian territory until I have had an opportunity of conferring with you."<sup>5</sup> For more than a week Admiral Caperton's pleas for a statement of American policy went unanswered while, with a great deal of evident soul-searching, that policy was formulated in Washington.

Advice to the President and the Secretary of State poured in from many predictable sources. Governor Fort suggested that the Haitian cacos (irregular soldiers) be disarmed through the simple technique of buying their rifles for a dollar or two each. So great was the cacos need for money now that the Americans had ended the revolutionary profession, he asserted, it seemed quite probable that within thirty days the government could be the owner of all the arms in Haiti if his suggestion were put into effect. (The

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5. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to Secretary of the Navy, Memorandum, July 30, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 6.





Occupation authorities did in fact later pursue such a policy with marked success.) From Mr. James P. McDonald, of the Haitian National Railroad, came a long letter comprising his views of what should be done in Haiti. He recommended a Provisional President for Haiti who would then be charged with the negotiation of a treaty giving the United States control of Haitian finances and the right to employ its armed forces to still rebellion. After the signing of the treaty, a permanent President would be chosen to replace the Provisional President, who, after his role in the making of the treaty, would be so unpopular that he could no longer be effective. Mr. R.L. Farnham of the National City Bank hurried to Washington to confer with Robert Lansing, but the latter, as opposed to his predecessor, Mr. Bryan, was not so enamored of Farnham's reasoned argument or persuaded of the cleanness of his hands when it came to Haiti. Of all those who had the President's ear, either directly or indirectly through Lansing in the days immediately following the landing of American forces, Paul Fuller, Jr., appears to have been most influential. He argued that all governmental functions in Haiti should be taken over by the United States and confided to the War Department, pending an honest election and the establishment of a responsible Haitian Government.

The legality of the American landing in Haiti, under the Constitution, worried President Wilson, and the Division of Latin American Affairs, quoting liberally from a 1912 memo-



Memorandum prepared by J. Reuben Clark, presented its views on the subject. (Mr. Clark, ironically, was destined to be the author of a much more famous memorandum in 1928 expressing a philosophy somewhat divergent from that which follows.)

Inasmuch as the use in foreign countries of the military forces of the government for the purpose of protecting American life and property therein situated does not amount to an act of war or to a declaration of war, it is doubtful if Congress has authority directly to control such use....

It appears unnecessary to elaborate any argument going to show that the President as Chief Executive is, under the Constitution, primarily charged with the conduct of our foreign relations, including the protection of the lives and property of our citizens abroad, save in so far as the Constitution expressly vests a part of these functions in some other branch of government (for example, the participation of the Senate in the making of Treaties)....

Under this general right to protect American citizens, their property, etc., it is thought that practical intervention does not constitute an act of war, but purposes to render to Haiti friendly services, or acts not amounting to war. If this intervention can accomplish the re-establishment of a government which can maintain peace in Haiti and can leave in the hands of the United States Government or of American citizens, the financial control, that is, in the form of the collection of customs and the disbursement of public funds received from all sources of national income, it is thought that such a reorganization would bring to Haiti that stability which is indispensable to its proper future development.<sup>6</sup>

It stretches the imagination to conceive "practical intervention" carried to the extent of achieving complete financial control as not constituting an act of war. Further, justifying the intervention on the grounds that it was nec-

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Latin American Affairs Division to Secretary of State, Memorandum, August 5, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 7.





essary for the protection of American lives and property is difficult, for the fact is that throughout Haiti's revolutionary miseries American lives and property were remarkably well respected. It goes without saying, however, that that respect was almost certainly due to the threat of heavy retaliation, a threat quietly imposed by the almost constant presence of American warships in Haitian waters.

Lansing, despite the solicited and unsolicited advice showered upon him, found the situation in Haiti immediately after the landing both distressing and perplexing. There seemed to be no excuse, no grounds for reprisal as there had been at Vera Cruz, for the continued presence of American forces ashore. The justification eventually accepted and offered to President Wilson was that it was the humane duty of the occupying forces to furnish the means to relieve famine conditions in Port-au-Prince and other Haitian cities. If naval authorities were directed to take over the collection of customs on imports and exports, funds realized might be expended for the relief of starving people. Conditions were indeed grim in Haiti as a result of years of revolutionary disruption, and Admiral Caperton reported that women and children were actually dying in the streets of Port-au-Prince from hunger. He requested relief funds from the Navy Department and received from Josephus Daniels the terse direction to "inform influential Haitians no funds available for supplying food. Suggest they form proper organized relief society and if possible devise some scheme for work.



If necessary you are authorized furnish what provisions you can spare at Navy rates. Great danger of encouraging idleness should be kept continually in mind."<sup>7</sup> There were, of course, no influential Haitians with the slightest interest in forming societies for the relief of the starving masses.

On August 4, 1915, President Wilson, with misgivings, made his decision.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

These are serious matters and my own judgement is as much perplexed as yours.

I fear we have not the legal authority to do what we apparently ought to do, and that if we did do what is necessary it would constitute a case very like that of Mr. Roosevelt's action in Santo Domingo, and have very much the same issue.

I suppose there is nothing for it but to take the bull by the horns and restore order. A long programme ... involves legislation and the co-operation of the Senate in treaty-making, and must therefore await the session of our Congress.

In the meantime this is plain to me:

1. We must send to Port-au-Prince a force sufficient to absolutely control the city not only but also the country immediately about it from which it draws its food. I would be obliged if you would ascertain from the Secretary of the Navy whether he has such a force available that can reach there soon. (This will probably involve making the city authorities virtually subordinate to our commander. They may hand the city government over to us voluntarily.)

2. We must let the present Congress know that we will protect it but that we will not recognize any action on its part which does not put men in charge of affairs whom we can trust to handle and put an end to revolution.

3. We must give all who now have authority there

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<sup>7</sup>. Secretary of the Navy to Commander Cruiser Squadron, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, Despatch, August 3, 1915, Admiral William B. Caperton Papers, MSS Division, Library of Congress.





or who desire to have it or who think they have it or are about to have it to understand that we shall take steps to prevent the payment of debts contracted to finance revolutions: in other words, that we consider it our duty to insist upon constitutional government there and will, if necessary (that is, if they force us to it as the only way) take charge of elections and see that a real government is erected which we can support...<sup>8</sup>

Upon receipt of the above, Robert Lansing went about the business of drafting detailed instructions to Admiral Caperton and Chargé d'Affaires Davis to implement the President's decision. The Naval General Board reaffirmed its position of a year earlier concerning Mole St. Nicholas and Lansing included in the draft of his instruction to Admiral Caperton a statement to the effect that the United States disavowed any intention to seek the cession of the mole for a naval base. This statement, however, was deleted by the President himself who substituted words to the effect that the question of the cession of Mole St. Nicholas would be taken up at a later date with the reorganized Haitian government.<sup>9</sup> This does not, however, mean that the President entertained any sinister desires for Haitian territory, though that was the interpretation placed upon his wording by later critics of the intervention. Almost certainly he was simply expressing Yankee shrewdness by not giving away a valuable

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. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, President Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, August 4, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 6.

. Ibid. Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, August 9, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 6.





ward in advance of treaty negotiations.

In the meantime, Admiral Caperton and his Chief of Staff, Captain Beach, were caught up in the whirlpool of Haitian politics. There were two major factions hoping to name Sam's successor in office. The Committee of Public Safety, representing the latest revolutionists, backed Bobo, while the Congress, then in session, leaned toward Sudre Dartiguenave, the President of the Senate. There is little doubt but that for the presence of American forces, events would have taken their normal course in Haiti and Bobo would have been elected handily. To be sure, Congress elected the President, but Congress had never before stood in the way of a general whose cacos were in the streets of Port-au-Prince. Bobo's open anti-Americanism made him quite unacceptable to both the Admiral and Mr. Davis, and both sent uncomplimentary reports concerning his character to their superiors in Washington. Captain Beach held frequent meetings ashore with representatives of both factions, and gradually became convinced that Dartiguenave was indeed a para avis - a reasonably honest Haitian politician. It seems likely that Mr. Furniss, the ex-Minister, helped persuade him of that, for several meetings with Dartiguenave took place at Furniss' house. The same despatches that damned Bobo, soon began to praise Dartiguenave, especially in view of the latter's willingness to grant the United States everything it could conceivably want in a future settlement, including customs control and Mole St. Nicholas.



On August 6, 1915, Admiral Caperton gave orders that all Haitian soldiers not living in Port-au-Prince were to leave the city, and within a few hours of his announcement marines began to arrest those who remained. There was some resistance and two Haitians were killed. This move, made possible by the reinforcement of the landing party by the Second Marine Regiment, broke the back of the Bobo movement. The next day, August 7, he received from the Navy Department its first statement of policy. He was directed to conciliate the Haitian people and to ensure them that the United States had no intention of keeping its forces in Haiti any longer than absolutely necessary to effect the re-establishment of a stable and firm government by the Haitian people. This was followed, on August 9, by an extraordinary despatch which stated, among other things, "whenever the Haitians wish you may permit the election of a President to take place. The election of Dartiguenave is preferred by the United States."<sup>10</sup>

More precise instructions were sent to the American Chargé d'Affaires. Davis was directed to confer with the Admiral and in a manner as best determined by the two of them, ensure that the following was made unmistakably clear to the leading Haitian politicians.

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<sup>10</sup> D. Acting Secretary of the Navy to Commander Cruiser Squadron, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, Despatch, August 9, 1915, Admiral William B. Caperton Papers, MSS Division, Library of Congress.





First: Let Congress understand that the Government of the United States intends to uphold it, but that it cannot recognize action which does not establish in charge of Haitian affairs those whose abilities and dispositions give assurances of putting an end to factional disorders.

Second: In order that no misunderstanding can possibly occur after election, it should be made perfectly clear to candidates as soon as possible and in advance of their election, that the United States expects to be intrusted with the practical control of the customs and such financial control over the affairs of the Republic of Haiti as the United States may deem necessary for an efficient administration.

The Government of the United States considers it its duty to support a constitutional Government. It means to assist in the establishing of such a Government, and to support it as long as necessity may require. It has no design upon the political or territorial integrity of Haiti; on the contrary, what has been done, as well as what will be done, is conceived in an effort to aid the people of Haiti in establishing a stable Government and in maintaining domestic peace throughout the Republic.<sup>11</sup>

The above was passed almost verbatim by Captain Beach to all Senators and Deputies at an informal meeting early on August 11, 1915. Chargé d'Affaires Davis was present at that meeting and further explained the demands which would be made of the reorganized Haitian Government by the United States. Later that day, the Committee of Public Safety, in a last effort to prevent the imminent election of Dartiguenave, ordered the Congress dissolved and sent soldiers to seal the doors of the Chambers. This move was anticipated by the American authorities, however, and marines shooed the soldiers away from the Chambers. Captain Beach then con-

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to R.B. Davis, Despatch, August 10, 1915, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 6.



fronted the Committee and ordered it dissolved, stating that its further continuance would cause its members to be considered public enemies and rebels against the United States.

On August 12, with Captain Beach on the floor of the Haitian Chambers, Sudre Dartiguenave was elected President of Haiti, gathering 94 of the 116 votes that were cast. Immediately after the votes were tallied, enthusiastic cheering broke out among the Delegates. The President-elect made a brief speech in which he thanked the American forces for their presence, and when he left the Chambers for the ceremonial ride to the palace, Admiral Caperton's Chief of Staff rode in the presidential carriage with him. In the Haitian capital on the day of the election, Beach wrote: "Everything quiet. Port-au-Prince had the appearance of being owned in fee simple by U. S. Marines."<sup>12</sup> The weather observation for the day, as recorded in the deck log of USS Washington, was "stormy."

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12. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Captain Edward J. Beach, undated and untitled Manuscript.



VIII. The Treaty.

The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty.

- Rousseau, The Social Contract.

For the first time in more years than most people then living in Haiti could remember, Haiti had a president who did not owe his election to a revolutionary faction. To be sure, the election of Dartiguenave could by no stretch of the imagination be called democratic, and he was, in a manner of speaking, a creature of the United States military intervention. But, depending upon the wisdom and justice of the Americans, his election brought hope to a people who for many generations had seemed to live without it.

On election day, August 12, 1915, an American military government was set up at Cape Haitian, and in the next few days the towns of St. Marc, Pétionville, and Léogane were occupied. An exulting Chief of Staff noted in his manuscript:

Hark, hark, the dogs do bark,  
The Cacos are leaving the towns.  
All in rags and some in tags,  
But none in velvet gowns.<sup>1</sup>

On August 17, Captain Beach formally introduced the

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1. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Captain Edward A. Beach, undated and untitled Manuscript.





American Chargé d'Affaires to President Dartiguenave, whose government had not yet been recognized by the United States. Mr. Davis delivered to the President a draft of the proposed treaty between the United States and Haiti, and he requested that the Haitian Congress pass a resolution without delay authorizing the President to enter into negotiations. Dartiguenave reaffirmed his intentions to give the United States everything that it desired in the treaty, and stated his belief that the Haitian Congress would interpose no serious objections.

The very next day, however, the Secretary of the Navy directed Admiral Caperton to take charge of the Haitian customs service, and to use the funds collected "for organizing and maintaining an efficient constabulary, for conducting such temporary public works as will afford immediate relief to the discharged soldiers and starving populace by giving them employment, and finally for the support of the Dartiguenave Government."<sup>2</sup> This action, which struck the Haitians at a most sensitive point, boded ill for the successful conclusion of treaty negotiations. On August 21, the customs house at Cape Haitian was taken over, and by September 2, with the taking over of the customs collection at Port-au-Prince, the operation was complete. Navy Paymasters, at first from the ships of the

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. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Secretary of the Navy to Commander Cruiser Squadron, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Despatch, August 18, 1915.



cruiser Squadron, and later ordered to this duty from the United States, assumed office at each Haitian port as Collector of Customs and Captain of the Port. Untrained and almost entirely unprepared for such service, the Paymasters brought to this unusual assignment a spirit of innovation and honest administration that almost overnight transformed the Haitian Customs Service.

An "Admiral Caperton Account" was opened at the National Bank of Haiti, and into this account were paid all funds collected by the Paymasters. Military commanders were then authorized to draw on this account under two appropriations: "Public Works," and "Military and Civil Government of United States Forces." Great leeway was granted in the administration of the accounts, and relatively large sums were expended in the purchase of arms from the cacos - as Governor Fort had recommended to President Wilson.

One particular evil of long standing in the Haitian economy prior to the American intervention was a wildly fluctuating foreign exchange rate. During the first months of the U.S. Navy's administration of the customs service a fixed rate of five gourdes to the dollar was established. An officer who participated in this stabilization wrote that it was vigorously opposed by Haitians quoting the best French economists, who tried to show that the Paymasters were ignorant of financial laws and were attempting to accomplish the impossible. The exchange rate was stabilized, however, and remained so. Perhaps the most touching





argument against this American action was that of the Haitian Minister of Finance, who said that his friends were accustomed to seeing the exchange rate fluctuate, that they counted on it, and that it was an economic crime to ruin their business.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the seizure of customs control, the public debt of Haiti was estimated to be as follows: (a) External debt, about \$20,000,000 (market value \$16,000,000); (b) Internal debt, about \$2,250,000 (market value \$1,625,000); (c) Floating debt (interest guarantees, etc.) \$2,250,000. The entire debt was secured, in one way or another, by liens on the customs revenue. It became a policy of the Occupation authorities to give priority to the rapid retirement of the public debt, a policy which may have had a prolonged depressing influence on the growth of the Haitian economy.

While the Paymasters were at work reorganizing the customs service, Admiral Caperton sought to have the treaty proposal accepted by the Haitian Government. President Driguenave, as previously noted, seemed agreeable from the start, but the American takeover of the customs service in advance of negotiations resulted in sharp resistance to the treaty within the Haitian Congress. Under the Constitution, ratification was required by both the Chamber of Deputies

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<sup>3</sup> Captain Charles Conard, (SC), USN, "A Year in Haiti's Customs and Fiscal Service," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 49, No. 4, April, 1923.



and the Senate. Failure of the Haitians to immediately accept the treaty proposals, which went considerably beyond those offered by Paul Fuller prior to the intervention, was viewed by some American officials as rank ingratitude. Secretary of State Lansing was fully aware of the moral position of the United States in pressing the negotiations, however, and he expressed his misgivings in a letter to President Wilson.

I confess that this method of negotiation, with our marines policing the Haitian capital, is high handed. It does not meet my sense of a nation's sovereign rights and is more or less an exercise of force and an invasion of Haitian independence. From a practical standpoint, however, I cannot but feel that it is the only thing to do if we intend to cure the anarchy and disorder which prevails in that Republic....

I have not been unmindful of the possible criticism which may be aroused in the Senate in case this treaty should be signed and submitted to them for action. As I said, it seems a high handed procedure, but I do not see how else we can obtain the desirable end of establishing a stable government in Haiti and maintaining domestic peace there.<sup>4</sup>

To the above, the President replied: "This is, I think, necessary and has my approval. Do you think it will affect Latin American opinion unfavorably?"<sup>5</sup>

Measures subsequently taken to secure the treaty on American terms were extraordinary. On August 25, the Acting

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. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to President Woodrow Wilson, August 13, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.  
. Ibid., President Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, memorandum, August 13, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.



Secretary of the Navy (Franklin D. Roosevelt), Secretary of State Lansing, and Captain Edward L. Beach (temporarily recalled to the United States by his wife's serious illness) met in Washington and drafted a message to President Dartiguenave, signed by Beach, in which the Haitian President was assured of continued support by the United States should he decide to dissolve Congress, dismiss his Cabinet, and form another government of "patriots" who would be willing to accede to the treaty.<sup>6</sup> At about this same time the American Chargé d'Affaires was instructed to orally impress the "de facto Haitian authorities" of the serious consequences which would attend rejection of American demands. Should that happen, two courses of action would be considered. The United States would either establish a military government pending "honest elections," or permit control of the Haitian Government to pass to those willing to cooperate with American authorities.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of the above efforts at persuasion, on August 27, the Haitian Government made a written reply to the latest treaty proposition in which practically every stipulation of the original treaty was either omitted or so changed as to defeat its purpose. The American Legation at Port-au-

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6. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Acting Secretary of the Navy to USS Washington, Despatch, August 25, 1915.

7. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to American Legation, Port-au-Prince, Despatch, August 24, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.





Prince was then instructed to conclude the treaty as originally drafted without modification, and to inform the Haitian Government that it was expected to proceed without undue delay.<sup>8</sup>

Admiral Caperton then applied more direct pressure by proclaiming martial law, on September 3, 1915. The order applied to Port-au-Prince and all other areas under his military control, which by then included virtually all important cities and towns. The proclamation of martial law was accompanied by a specific decree directed at the Haitian press, in which trial before military courts was established for "the publishing of false or incendiary propaganda against the Government of the United States, or the Government of Haiti, or the publishing of any false, indecent, or obscene propaganda, letters signed or unsigned, or matter which tends to disturb the public peace."<sup>9</sup>

President Dartiguenave reported that these measures had strengthened his hand, but that certain influential members of his Cabinet remained adamant against those portions of the treaty proposal having to do with financial matters. Reassured of Admiral Caperton's continued support, he then

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8. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to American Legation, Port-au-Prince, Despatch, August 29, 1915, Micro Copy 611, Vol. 1.

9. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Office of the Provost Marshal, Port-au-Prince, September 3, 1915, a Proclamation.



demanded and received the resignations of his Minister of Public Works and Minister of Foreign Affairs. American offensive operations against the cacos, who were becoming troublesome, particularly in the north, were held in abeyance while Dartiguenave pressured his reordered Cabinet to accept the treaty. Finally, on September 16, the "Treaty Between the United States and Haiti - Finances, Economic Development and Tranquility of Haiti" was signed by the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis Borno, and Chargé d'Affaires Davis. Of its 16 articles, the following are particularly noteworthy and they form the legal basis for much of what was to be attempted by the Occupation.

Art. I. The Government of the United States will, by its good offices, aid the Haitian Government in the proper and efficient development of its agricultural, mineral and commercial resources and in the establishment of the finances of Haiti on a firm and solid basis.

Art. II. The President of Haiti shall appoint, upon nomination by the President of the United States, a general receiver and such aids and employees as may be necessary, who shall collect, receive and apply all customs duties on imports and exports accruing at the several custom houses and ports of entry of the Republic of Haiti.

The President of Haiti shall appoint, upon nomination by the President of the United States, a financial adviser, who shall be an officer attached to the ministry of finance, to give effect to whose proposals and labors the minister will lend efficient aid. The financial adviser shall devise an adequate system of public accounting, aid in increasing the revenues and adjusting them to the expenses, inquire into the validity of the debts of the republic, enlighten both Governments with reference to all eventual debts, recommend improved methods of collecting and applying the revenues, and make such other recommendations to the minister of finance as may be deemed necessary for the welfare and prosperity of Haiti.





Art. V. All sums collected and received by the general receiver shall be applied, first, to the payment of the salaries and allowances of the general receiver, his assistants and employees and expenses of the receivership, including the salary and expenses of the financial adviser, which salaries will be determined by previous agreement; second, to the interest and sinking fund of the public debt of the Republic of Haiti; and, third, to the maintenance of the constabulary referred to in Article X, and then the remainder to the Haitian Government for purposes of current expenses....

Art. VIII. The Republic of Haiti shall not increase its public debt except by previous agreement with the President of the United States, and shall not contract any debt or assume any financial obligation unless the ordinary revenues of the republic available for that purpose, after defraying the expenses of the Government, shall be adequate to pay the interest and provide a sinking fund for the final discharge of such debt.

Art. IX. The Republic of Haiti will not without a previous agreement with the President of the United States, modify the customs duties in a manner to reduce revenues therefrom; and in order that the revenues of the republic may be adequate to meet the public debt and the expenses of the Government, to preserve tranquility and to promote material prosperity, the Republic of Haiti will cooperate with the financial adviser in his recommendations for improvement in the methods of collecting and disbursing the revenues and for new sources of needed income.

Art. X. The Haitian Government obligates itself, for the preservation of domestic peace, the security of individual rights and full observance of the provisions of this treaty, to create without delay an efficient constabulary, urban and rural, composed of native Haitians. This constabulary shall be organized and officered by Americans, appointed by the President of Haiti, upon nomination by the President of the United States. The Haitian Government shall clothe these officers with the proper and necessary authority and uphold them in the performance of their functions. These officers will be replaced by Haitians as they, by examination, conducted under direction of a board to be selected by the senior American officer of this constabulary and in the presence of a representative of the Haitian Government, are found to be qualified to assume such duties. The constabulary herein provided for, shall, under the direction



of the Haitian Government, have supervision and control of arms and ammunition, military supplies, and traffic therein, throughout the country. The high contracting parties agree that the stipulations in this article are necessary to prevent factional strife and disturbances.

Art. XI. The Government of Haiti agrees not to surrender any of the territory of the Republic of Haiti by sale, lease or otherwise, or jurisdiction over such territory, to any foreign government or power, nor to enter into any treaty or contract with any foreign power or powers that will impair or tend to impair the independence of Haiti.

Art. XII. The Haitian Government agrees to execute with the United States a protocol for the settlement, by arbitration or otherwise, of all pending pecuniary claims of foreign corporations, companies, citizens or subjects against Haiti.

Art. XIII. The Republic of Haiti, being desirous to further the development of its natural resources, agrees to undertake and execute such measures as in the opinion of the high contracting parties may be necessary for the sanitation and public improvement of the republic, under the supervision and direction of an engineer or engineers, to be appointed by the President of Haiti upon nomination by the President of the United States, and authorized for that purpose by the Government of Haiti.

Art. XIV. The high contracting parties shall have authority to take such steps as may be necessary to insure the complete attainment of any of the objects comprehended in this treaty and, should the necessity occur, the United States will lend an efficient aid for the preservation of Haitian independence and the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property and individual liberty.

Art. XVI. The present treaty shall remain in full force and virtue for the term of ten years, to be counted from the day of exchange of ratifications, and further for another term of ten years if, for specific reasons presented by either of the high contracting parties, the purpose of this treaty has not been fully accomplished....10





The treaty was silent concerning the presence of American forces in Haiti, nor was anything said about American control or influence over the Haitian judiciary or public education. These apparent oversights would provoke heated controversy in the years ahead.

The signing of the treaty was followed by the formal recognition of the Dartiguenave Government by the United States, and at 8:55 A.M. on September 17, 1915, Admiral Caperton's flagship fired a national salute of 21 guns with the Haitian Ensign at the fore. The treaty signed was not the treaty ratified, however, and further American pressure was applied to bring the recalcitrant Haitian Congress into line. Funds for the ordinary expenses of the Haitian Government, including the salaries of Senators and Deputies, were frozen. On October 3, Dartiguenave threatened to resign unless the overdue salaries were paid, and he was informed that funds would be available immediately upon ratification of the treaty. This tactic had its desired effect on the Chamber of Deputies, which ratified the treaty by a vote of 75 to 6, on October 6. The Admiral then authorized an allowance to be paid to the Haitian Government to meet current expenses, but, as directed by the Navy Department, he kept the question of back salaries for the employees of the government open, pending final ratification of the treaty.

Opposition continued in the Haitian Senate, and the American State Department became more and more apprehensive





of ultimate defeat of its proposals. This seemed a real possibility when, on November 8, the Haitian Senate issued a lengthy report which declared certain articles of the treaty unconstitutional, and recommended renewal of treaty negotiations with a view to obtaining a treaty the terms of which would practically nullify United States control in Haiti. Firmer measures were evidently required to secure ratification, and they were immediately forthcoming. The Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, after consultation with Secretary Lansing, directed Admiral Caperton to make the following statement to President Dartiguenave and his cabinet.

I have the honor to inform the President of Haiti and the members of his Cabinet that I am personally gratified that public sentiment continues favorable to the treaty; that there is a strong demand from all classes for immediate ratification, and that the treaty will be ratified Thursday. I am sure that you gentlemen will understand my sentiment in this matter, and I am confident if the treaty fails of ratification that my Government has the intention to retain control in Haiti until the desired end is accomplished, and that it will forthwith proceed to the complete pacification of Haiti so as to insure internal tranquility necessary to such development of the country and its industry as will afford relief to the starving populace now unemployed. Meanwhile the present Government will be supported in the effort to secure stable conditions and lasting peace in Haiti, whereas those offering opposition can only expect such treatment as their conduct merits. The United States Government is particularly anxious for immediate ratification by the present Senate of this treaty, which was drawn up with the full intention of employing as many Haitians as possible to aid in giving effect to its provisions, so that suffering may be relieved at the earliest possible date. Rumors of bribery to defeat the treaty are rife, but are not believed. However, should they prove true, those who accept or give bribery will be vigorously



prosecuted.<sup>11</sup>

In private instructions to Admiral Caperton, appended to the above, Secretary Daniels stated that it was expected that the American position would be made sufficiently clear to remove all opposition and to secure immediate ratification of the treaty. That expectation was fulfilled, and on November 12, 1915, the Haitian Senate ratified the treaty by a vote of 25 to 9. Pending approval by the United States Senate (given by unanimous vote on February 28, 1916), a modus vivendi was entered into by the two governments which permitted the terms of the treaty to be put into effect immediately.

Thus did the United States secure a treaty and assume the "obligations" which would be cited in the years ahead as both justification and necessity for a prolonged and increasingly unpopular military occupation of the Black republic.

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1. U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Secretary of the Navy to Commander Cruiser Squadron, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, despatch, November 10, 1915.





## X. Pacification.

We were all imbued with the fact that we were trustees of a huge estate that belonged to minors.... The Haitian people are divided into two classes, one class wears shoes and the other does not.... Ninety-nine percent of the people of Haiti are the most kindly, generous, hospitable, pleasure loving people I have ever known. They would not hurt anybody. They are most gentle when in their natural state. When the other one percent that wears vici kid shoes with long pointed toes and celluloid collars, stirs them up and incites them with liquor and voodoo stuff they are capable of the most horrible atrocities; they are cannibals. They ate the liver of one Marine.... Those that wear shoes I took as a joke. Without a sense of humor you could not live in Haiti among those people, among the shoe class.... But the people who were barefooted, the women wearing mother hubbards and the men dungarees halfway up to their knees, with scarred feet, indicating the hardest kind of toil, and with great blisters on their hands, and with the palms of their hands as hard as a piece of sole leather - those people you could absolutely trust. I went all over Haiti living with them in their shacks, and they always gave you the best they had - food and anything they had in the world. They did not know the value of anything. They did not know anything about time, distance, or value.... What we wanted was clean little towns, with tidy thatch-roofed dwellings. That is what the country can afford, and what it ought to have....

- Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler, USMC, October 27, 1921.

With the treaty ratified, Admiral Caperton felt free to turn his attention to the settlement of affairs with the cacos of the north, who, with increasing boldness, were interrupting the flow of food, water, and goods for export to the principal towns and ports of a large area of the country. The cacos were not a numerous force, and earlier efforts to "buy" them and their weapons had met with some



success. As much as 50,000 gourdes had been offered late in September for the surrender of each 1,000 cacos with their weapons. Further, an American guarantee that the Haitian Government's proclamation of general amnesty would be respected was widely published throughout the country. In spite of this it was evident that a military campaign would have to be launched against the diehard remnants of the caco armies, and in the period November 1 - 17, 1915, their strongholds in the mountains of the north were systematically reduced, often by personal heroics on the part of Marine officers and men which would win them lasting fame in the Corps. Only one American officer and one enlisted man were wounded in the entire campaign, which was climaxed by the killing of perhaps a hundred cacos at the capture of Fort Riviere. The news of what he considered an excessive shedding of Haitian blood caused Secretary Daniels to order a suspension of the American offensive, but by then the back of the cacos resistance had been broken.

The success of American military action in Haiti, where a relative handful of marines and sailors were able to disarm and pacify a population of perhaps two and a half million dispersed over rugged and difficult terrain, seems almost incredible in view of later American experience in Vietnam. The explanation lies, of course, not only in the undoubted courage and professionalism of the marines, and their great superiority in weapons, but in the nature of the cacos soldier, who was, more often than not, half-starved and recruited



with clubs to fight for a "cause" of which he knew and cared little. It was not, as some suggested at the time, a question of inherent inferiority in the Haitian character as a fighting man - the French experience in Haiti would seem to disprove that. If there was a failure of spirit, it almost certainly was a failure of the elite leadership to persuade the Haitian soldier that he was fighting for anything other than his General's personal gain. The overwhelming mass of the Haitian people expressed virtually no sympathy for the cacos and their generals, and it seems quite probable, except for perhaps a very brief period in 1919, that the American marines were actually a more welcome sight in the eyes of the peasants than were their cacos brothers.

One of the first acts of the American intervention had been to disband the regular Haitian armed forces, which prior to 1915 had consisted of 38 line and 4 artillery regiments, regiments of the Presidential Guard, and a gendarmerie of more than 1800 men. The paper strength of this force was about 11,000 men, officered by 308 generals and 50 colonels, plus additional honorary high ranking officers appointed by the President pro tem from among his friends and supporters. The pay of a private was one gourde a month, plus four gourdes for subsistence, little of which was ever received by the Haitian enlisted man, soldiers' pay and most appropriations for their maintenance customarily going into the pockets of the generals.





Under Article X of the Treaty an "efficient constabulary" was to be established to replace the armed forces of Haiti, and even before the ratification of the treaty steps were taken in that direction. In September, 1915, the first units of the Haitian Gendarmerie were formed, with an initial strength of 336 men, most of whom were privates. By February 1, 1916, the Gendarmerie was responsible for policing the entire country, its strength increasing to 2,533 Haitians and 115 American commissioned and non-commissioned officers detailed to the Gendarmerie for service. In June, 1916, the American Congress passed a law authorizing the service of Americans in the Haitian Gendarmerie, and henceforth American Marine and Naval personnel were commissioned in the Gendarmerie while still holding rank and entitled to pay from their parent services. Major Smedley D. Butler, who had earned a Medal of Honor for his part in the reduction of Fort Riviere, was commissioned a Major General in the Haitian service and became the first Commander of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti. This organization progressed in strength and efficiency so rapidly that by the end of 1916 the Marine Brigade was withdrawn from the interior of the country to the coastal towns, principally Port-au-Prince and Cape Haitian, and Gendarmes had the responsibility for both police and military matters throughout the country.

Haitians were enlisted voluntarily in the Gendarmes, and enlistment papers similar to those used by American mar-



ies. They wore marine uniforms, with the exception of the Marine Corps device. They were issued marine weapons and received marine training. There was absolutely no difficulty in getting sufficient volunteers, but the physical condition of the recruits was appalling.

We made every effort to cure those that we had, so that they would not go to sleep standing up in the daytime. That was the one test. I have frequently found a sentry on a post in front of an important building sound asleep, standing up with the sun shining in his face. That is not his fault. He was diseased. An examination showed that 95 per cent of them had blood diseases and 85 per cent had intestinal worms, and we took immediate measures to cure it, and before I left Haiti the gendarmes could keep awake for two or three hours.... Never during the time I was in Haiti, nor from any reports I have received since, has any disloyalty on the part of a gendarme occurred.... My orderly in Port-au-Prince was the worst Caco in Haiti, and I picked him out because he was the ugliest brute I ever saw, and I trusted him with my children, my wife, and everything. He was the most faithful man I have ever known.... Whenever I had an inspection to make in the woods, I left my family with this ugly Caco sleeping on a couch on the front porch of my house, and he never would move for two weeks. They would take his food to him. And nobody would come into the yard either. I trusted him absolutely. It is a great army, that gendarmerie....<sup>1</sup>

Within the Gendarmerie, Haiti was divided for purposes of command into Departments, headed by Colonels of Gendarmerie, and further subdivided into Districts. The Department of Port-au-Prince had seven Districts, the Department of the Cape eight, and the Department of Cayes three. Districts

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Statement of Brig. Gen. Smedley Butler to Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, Oct. 27, 1921, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 10.





ere normally commanded by a Captain of Gendarmerie, and districts were in turn subdivided into three to five Sub-districts, commanded by Lieutenants. Gendarmerie outposts were permanently established at strategic points and these were commanded by non-commissioned (Haitian) officers. Two squadrons of cavalry were held in reserve at Port-au-prince and at Cape Haitian. The service of the Gendarmerie is one of the bright spots of the Occupation and, as will be discussed later, extended far beyond the normal range of police and military duties.

Commencing January 1, 1916, all salaries and expenses of every nature, pertaining to the Haitian Government, were ordered paid directly to the employees or claimants by agents of the American Occupation. This action raised a storm of protest in the Haitian Government, whose members saw yet another source of "income" - the discounting of feuilles - wiped away. The system adopted was to effect payment by checks of a non-negotiable character, thus assuring that funds actually reached the hands of those for whom intended. The "implied insult" of ending the transfer of funds to government officials was heightened by American action taken to verify the correctness of paylists provided by the government.

Municipal elections in January, 1916, drew the attention and concern of American authorities. When the election lists at Petitgoave mysteriously disappeared on election eve, the Mayor of that town was arrested by the Gendarmerie



and American officers moved in to supervise the town elections.

In the atmosphere created by these and other actions which the Haitians viewed as interference beyond that permitted by the treaty, the working relationship between the Occupation authorities and the Haitian Government steadily deteriorated, particularly as early promises of American aid and capital inflow failed to materialize. An attempt to negotiate a \$2 million dollar loan with a New York bank in December, 1915, failed when the bank insisted on the "moral guarantee of the United States Government" and that guarantee was not offered. Thus, Haiti's financial plight actually worsened in the early months of the intervention, in spite of American control of the customs. Interest as well as amortization payments on the public debt went into default. In fairness to the American authorities, however, this was the almost inevitable result of conditions brought about by the war in Europe, particularly the collapse of the French coffee market and a disastrous decline in Haitian exports. The general economic condition and specific American actions to make the Haitian Government more "efficient" resulted in widespread unemployment that was felt hardest by those who had formerly made their living on the labor of the peasant class or in non-productive government work. Conditions in the cities, especially in Port-au-Prince, reached famine proportions in the first winter of the intervention, and American efforts at relief were not overly generous.





It is interesting, in the light of the welfare ethic that would flower half a century later, to examine the modest program placed in effect by the Americans at Port-au-Prince. The following is extracted from an official report made to the Navy Department by P.A. Surgeon P.E. Garrison, entitled "Account of the Red Cross Relief Work in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, January to April, 1916."

For several months, waste food collected from American naval vessels in the harbor of Port-au-Prince, and from the Marine Forces ashore, had been distributed at the Wesleyan Mission, under the direction of its pastor, the Reverend Mr. Turnbull. This work has been continued, and the cost of collection and distribution paid out of the Red Cross funds. [The sum of \$1500. was donated by the Red Cross during this period.] From ten to twenty-five barrels of food have been collected and distributed daily.... Our records show from 250 to over 400 persons fed once or twice daily with this food, the average number in the "bread line" during 13 weeks being 320....

In as much as the daily amount of food collected from the ships varied greatly, according to the number and sizes of ships in the harbor, a certain supply of dry provisions was kept on hand to supplement the distribution on poor days....

These dry groceries were used also to relieve a form of poverty which the "bread line" could not reach. Our attention was called repeatedly to cases of extreme need in families of educated and self-respecting people who, from one cause or another, had been reduced to a condition of actual want. The chief causes active in producing such conditions were loss of employment occasioned by recent political changes, the failure of the Haitian Government to pay salaries for several months, and the depressed state of business and industry.... Such families would not stand in line with a ragged and dirty crowd of humanity clamoring for a portion of the food collected from the ships, but they would come quietly to the depot with their identification cards and receive a small package of rice or beans to be cooked or eaten at home....

We have already drawn attention to the danger of encouraging and prolonging a state of indigency, especially among an ignorant population whose sense of self-respect is not sufficiently developed to make





dependence obnoxious. The number of persons applying to the Red Cross for food constantly tends to increase, and undoubtedly would increase indefinitely if not controlled. The bread line becomes a regular point of call for the professional beggars of the city. Many not really in need come with false stories of distress. Two or more members of the same family have been discovered, each separately drawing food for the entire family. A number have attempted to obtain a double portion of food by applying at the two depots under different names. A few instances have been reported to us of families leaving their homes and coming long distances to Port-au-Prince because they heard that food was being given away here. Two extreme instances have come to our attention of men declining opportunities to work for wages because the work would interfere with their daily call at the food depot...<sup>2</sup>

On January 31, 1916, USS Washington, which had lain at anchor in the harbor of Port-au-Prince for six long months, her crew for the greater part of this time confined to the ship except for "recreation parties" permitted in late October and thereafter, got underway for Guantanamo and eventually the United States. A thousand little dramas are recorded in Washington's log from the hot, sultry days and nights spent in Haiti. The ship's buglar lost three front teeth in a fight on board and his injury was recorded as "not in the line of duty." A wardroom cook by the name of Ah Hee was taken to Captain's mast for "gross carelessness, allowing soap to get into the wardroom lunch." Two firemen were warned for "cheering the French cruiser," and an ordinary seaman, returning from one of those "recreation parties" ashore, was

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<sup>2</sup> U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45.



sentenced to loss of pay in the amount of \$3.48 for "failing to report to the venereal head for prophylactic treatment, after having been lawfully directed to do so."

The flag of the Cruiser Squadron Commander was shifted on Washington's departure to USS Tennessee. The Commanding Officers of these two ships relieved each other so that Captain Edward L. Beach of the Washington could continue to act as Admiral Caperton's Chief of Staff.

An increasingly bitter relationship between the Dartiguenave administration and the Haitian Congress was climaxed on April 5, 1916, by the President's dissolution of the Senate, which had threatened to impeach him. This action had the reluctant support of Admiral Caperton. Dartiguenave attempted to get the Chamber of Deputies to function as a constituent assembly, a project of doubtful legality, but the Chamber refused to pass on the constitutional changes desired by the President. It appeared that those would have to await the election of a new legislature, scheduled for the following January.

On May 10, 1916, disturbances in the Dominican Republic called Admiral Caperton to Santo Domingo, where he was to remain until his relief by Rear Admiral Pond on July 18. Henceforth military command in Haiti was exercised by the Marine Brigade Commander, who reported through the Admiral in Santo Domingo to the Navy Department. By this time American Naval and Marine Corps officers had assumed administrative control not only of the customs service, but public safety,





public works, and public health. In June, 1916, President Wilson nominated and President Dartiguenave appointed the first general receiver for Haiti, under the terms of the treaty. In July the first financial adviser was named. Navy Paymasters were relieved of their duties in the Haitian customs service on August 29, 1916, and thereafter the character of the Occupation regime gradually became more civilian. This did not, however, improve the working relationship with the Haitian Government. From the very start strong disagreement arose between the Minister of Finance and his financial adviser, but in spite of their respective titles there was little question of where the decision making power rested.

A year after the initial landing of American forces in Haiti, Americans there looked with increasing disfavor on the Haitian Government they had been most instrumental in bringing to power, and considered it not only hopelessly inefficient and insincere in carrying out its agreements with the Occupation, but thoroughly detested by the people and maintained in office only by the presence of armed American force. The solution of Haiti's troubles seemed as far away as ever.



4. A New Constitution.

I wrote the Haitian Constitution myself, and if I do say it, I think it is a pretty good constitution.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 18, 1920.

If I should be, as I fully expect to be, elected President of this just and honorable Republic, I will not empower an Assistant Secretary of the Navy to draft a Constitution for helpless neighbors in the West Indies and jam it down their throats at the points of bayonets borne by United States Marines.

- Senator Warren G. Harding, August 28, 1920.

As the year 1916 drew to a close, something in the nature of organized political opposition to the Dartiguenave government appeared in Port-au-Prince. This opposition was fairly well divided into two groups calling themselves "The Progressives" and "The Nationalists." The former claimed to be in favor of doing everything necessary for the development of the country, while attacking the President for being too easily controlled by the Americans. The latter agitated openly for Black rule and charged that Dartiguenave was preparing to amend the Constitution in such a way as to grant White ownership of land - the implication being that such would be but the first step toward return to slavery. Both groups were violently anti-Occupation and pledged to the impeachment of the President.

As previously indicated, Dartiguenave commanded little respect from American authorities in Haiti, and questions were raised with Washington concerning American policy should



the President in fact face ouster by the legislature which was scheduled to be elected in January, 1917. That policy was delineated in a Navy Department memorandum on January , 1917 which stated that the United States Government "will not countenance any impeachment proceedings which may be entered into by the legislative body of Haiti, but, on the contrary, ... will consider such action as a move to begin evolutionary and disorderly political activity in the Republic."<sup>1</sup> This policy was made clear to the Haitian Government and the political opposition by American diplomatic and military representatives in Port-au-Prince. The reason for this perhaps surprising continued support of Dartiguenave may be found in part in his suddenly more agreeable attitude toward the Americans, but more particularly in the need for certain changes in the Haitian Constitution which it was believed could only be secured through the wholehearted support of the President.

In November, 1916, the Haitian Government had presented to the Occupation authorities and to the American Legation in Port-au-Prince a draft for a new Constitution to be presented to the National Assembly in April, 1917. This draft was forwarded to the American State Department and after a careful study certain modifications were "suggested." These included (1) the elimination of a residence requirement of

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45.





five years for foreigners to qualify for ownership of property (the complete text of this article in the new Constitution eliminated a bar to white ownership of real property in Haiti which had existed for 113 years), and (2) ratification in the new Constitution of all acts by the American military authorities in Haiti. These recommendations were considered most necessary, but others were suggested as being of somewhat lesser importance to the United States. These were: (a) Curtailment of exorbitant expense accounts for Secretaries of State; (b) disestablishment of the Council of State, which was considered unnecessary in view of the existence of legislative bodies; (c) impeachment of Justices of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals in the same manner as impeachment of Cabinet officers; (d) non-discrimination of foreigners in matters of protection; (e) elimination of the Chamber of Accounts, which was considered redundant in view of the offices of Collector of Customs and the Financial Adviser.

With considerable difficulty, the Dartiguenave Government was persuaded to accept all of the proposed changes in its draft Constitution. None of them appear today to be unreasonable, and the only really controversial point concerned foreign ownership of property. This last was considered essential to attract investment capital to Haiti, though for years the constitutional bar to ownership had been sidestepped by foreigners, particularly Germans, through the simple device of dummy Haitian partnerships.



The election of a new national assembly was held without incident in January, 1917, and by all accounts it was as fair and honest as any election Haiti had ever known. The polling places were carefully supervised by the Gendarmerie, with its American officers discreetly in the background. A date in April was set for the convening of the assembly and its consideration of the new Constitution.

In the latter part of January and the early weeks of February, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, accompanied by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General George Barnett, made an inspection trip to Haiti. Arriving in Port-au-Prince, their party crossed the country on horseback to Cape Haitian. Mr. Roosevelt talked freely with Haitian and Occupation officials along his route, and was apparently much impressed with the progress being made by the American marines in their road building and sanitation work. He later reported an almost total absence of complaints directed against the Occupation. The impending war with Germany cut short a planned excursion to the Dominican Republic, and the party hurried back to Washington from Cape Haitian.

In March, the Haitian Government formally requested the good offices of the United States in the negotiation of a loan of \$30,000,000 for the purpose of developing the country's resources and to take advantage of a favorable opportunity to retire some of its foreign debt (an opportunity brought on by the war in Europe). In order that the proposed loan





might be placed on advantageous terms, the American Government thought it desirable to extend the life of the Haitian-American Treaty for an additional period of ten years, as permitted by Article XVI of the treaty, thus assuring prospective purchasers of Haitian bonds that the United States would have a continuing interest in their repayment. The agreement extending the life of the treaty for the full additional ten years was signed on March 28, 1917, by the Haitian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Louis Borno (later President of the Republic), and the American Minister to Port-au-Prince, Arthur Bailly-Blanchard, who was once more at his post. This made the new expiration date May 3, 1936 (i.e., 20 years from the formal exchange of ratifications). The extension was vigorously assailed by opponents of the treaty on two grounds: (1) only 11 months having passed since its coming into legal effect, the conclusion that it could not in the original 10 year period of its life "fully accomplish" its purpose was not justified, and (2) the extension of the treaty was not presented for action to either the Haitian Congress or the American Senate. Article XVI, however, provided for the extension of the treaty under given circumstances, and that provision had been accepted by the respective legislative bodies without argument, and further ratification was probably not necessary.

Though the treaty was duly extended, the hoped for loan did not materialize. This further embittered the Haitian Government toward the United States.



When the new Congress assembled in April, 1917, it was presented with the American-approved draft of the new constitution. It appears that the Dartiguenave Government, in a momentary pique, let it be known that the proposals were actually American demands, and as a result the Congress summarily rejected them and began work on its own revised constitution, taking time off, however, to reject, unanimously, an American-inspired proposal for a declaration of war on Germany.

On June 16, 1917, President Dartiguenave suggested to American officials that the Congress be dismissed and the proposed Constitution submitted to the people for referendum. News of this reached the legislature, sitting as a National Assembly, and its members rushed to complete their version of a new Constitution. The reading of their draft was in progress when the Chief of the Gendarmerie, Smedley Butler, entered the Chambers and delivered to the Speaker the President's decree dissolving the Assembly. When the Speaker refused to accept it, Butler read it to the Assembly himself, in impeccable French, and then ordered the Chambers cleared.

With the Assembly dispersed, constitutional reform proceeded at a more leisurely pace. It appeared evident that provision would have to be made for the operation of Haitian governmental affairs in the absence of a legislature, since no legislature could apparently be elected which was the least inclined to be cooperative with the Occupation. The task of drafting yet another Constitution for Haiti fell,



Notwithstanding Mr. Roosevelt's later claim to authorship, to three American officials directly concerned with the Occupation. These were Rear Admiral H. S. Knapp (the Senior Naval Officer in Haiti and in Haitian Waters), Brigadier General Eli Cole (Marine Brigade Commander), and Mr. F. L. Mayer (American Chargé d'Affaires at Port-au-Prince). Mr. Roosevelt's role seems to have been limited to a rather cursory review of work done by the officials named above.<sup>2</sup>

The drafting proceeded into the fall of 1917 and was accompanied by frequent consultations with the Dartiguenave Government, particularly with Louis Borno, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The challenge was to produce a document, democratic and liberal in tone, which could still be used to validate unrepresentative government. The Constitution ultimately produced begins with the words "the Republic of Haiti is one and indivisible, free, sovereign and independent. Its territory, including the islands dependent thereon, is inviolable, and cannot be alienated by any treaty or by any convention."<sup>3</sup> It provided for a popularly chosen Senate and Chamber of Deputies, and for the election by those two bodies meeting in joint session as the National Assembly of a President whose term of office would be four years (as

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<sup>2</sup> U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, F. L. Mayer to Admiral H. S. Knapp, August 12, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> The complete text of the Constitution, in translation, is found in Arthur C. Millspaugh, Haiti Under American Control, 1915-1930, (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1931).





proposed to the previous term of seven years). Deputies were reduced in number from 72 to 36, and Senators from 9 to 15. Provisions were made for a Council of State composed of 21 members appointed by the President, which in addition to its regular duties of advising the President, would exercise the legislative power in the absence of the elected legislature. Freedom of the press, trial by jury, and the right of assembly were guaranteed. The sensitive issue of foreign ownership of land was treated by Article V of the Constitution, which reads: "The right to own real estate shall be given to foreigners residing in Haiti and to the societies organized by foreigners for purposes of residence, and agricultural, commercial, industrial or educational enterprises. This right shall cease after a period of five years from the date when the foreigner shall have ceased to reside in the country or the activities of said companies shall have ceased." A special article ratified the acts of the American Occupation. Finally, the Gendarmerie d'Haiti was established as the country's only legal armed force.

The real joker in the American-drafted Constitution of 1918 lay in Title VIII, the Transitory Provisions. After establishing the term of the incumbent President so that it would expire on May 15, 1922, Title VIII went on to provide that "the first election of members of the legislative body after the adoption of the present Constitution shall take place on January 10 of an even-numbered year. The year



shall be fixed by a decree of the President of the Republic published at least three months before the meeting of the primary assemblies. The session of the legislative body when elected shall convene on the constitutional date immediately following the first election." This, coupled with the provision giving the legislative power (including the power to elect the President) to the presidentially appointed Council of State, actually made it possible for the incumbent President to remain in office indefinitely and to rule without benefit of an elected legislature by the simple devices of not naming a date for the legislative elections and by packing the Council of State with his own men. A final provision under Title VIII suspended the irremovability of judges for a period of six months from the date of the promulgation of the new Constitution.

These provisions, all of them, were carefully thought out. American experience with the last elected Haitian legislature had made it clear that the options were establishment of open American Military Government or support of an American-influenced Haitian dictatorship. The third option, evident today with the advantage of hindsight, was withdrawal, but that apparently received no serious consideration.

The legality of adopting the new Constitution by public referendum worried American officials, especially Admiral Kapp, and this probably explains the transitory provision concerning the Haitian judiciary. If necessary, American





authorities were quite prepared to pack Haitian courts to ensure that American actions in Haiti were not thwarted by legal technicalities. Knapp put his misgivings in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy in which he expressed the view that as the Constitution of Haiti then in effect would remain legally in effect until amended, the method of amendment should, in legal strictness, conform to the old Constitution. This would not be the case, he wrote, if the Constitution is changed by popular vote. He suggested, however, that this legal issue might be resolved by relying on the theory that all powers in democratic government come originally from the people, and that if it is impossible to use the regular method prescribed in the Constitution to amend it to contain certain features desired by the people, it would perhaps not be improper to refer the matter to the people as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

Knapp's philosophical loophole, if one were actually needed in Washington at the time, was apparently accepted, though the circumstances surrounding the constitutional referendum when it was actually held stripped it of what moral justification it might possibly have had. American action in the adoption of the Constitution, as in the signing and ratification of the treaty, rather poorly clothed the bald fact that ends were being taken to justify means.

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<sup>4</sup> U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., Rear Admiral H.S. Knapp to Secretary of the Navy, Sept. 8, 1917.



On June 12, 1918, the plebiscite on the new Constitution was held, under the supervision of the Gendarmerie. As the overwhelming majority of those voting could not read or write, ballots did not have to be marked. White ballots, signifying approval, were handed to each voter as he approached the ballot box. Pink ballots, signifying disapproval, were available from the attending Gendarmes on request. Entertainments, food and drink, and other persuasions were used to get out the vote. At some polling places, in order to discourage repeating, the thumbs of voters were marked with indelible ink as they left the ballot box. The Gendarmerie had received strict instructions not to use influence to obtain affirmative votes, but officers were told that they could and should explain the Constitution to the people who were unfamiliar with its provisions. Considering the large population of Haiti and the fact that there was no registration, the turnout of just under 100,000 was quite small, even though it was probably the largest vote ever given in Haiti.

The Brigade Commander, Colonel John H. Russell, wrote that the Dartiguenave Government used its influence to obtain the adoption of the Constitution and "it is thought all government employees voted at least once for it."<sup>5</sup> It seems clear that most of those voting did not know what they were

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<sup>5</sup> U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Colonel John H. Russell to the Chief of Naval Operations, June 17, 1918.



voting for. Russell reported that one man when questioned thought that he was voting for the election of a Pope, and another thought that he was voting for the President. It is likely that most of the Haitian Élite class boycotted the referendum altogether.

Under the circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that the people overwhelmingly approved the new Constitution by a vote of 98,294 to 796. The Constitution proclaimed and adopted, the Occupation authorities proceeded to carry out their obligations under the treaty. Soon, however, there was more trouble with the cacos.





# I. The Caco War.

Haitians, the day like the 1st of January 1804 will soon rise. Since 4 years the Occupation insults us in every way, every morning brings us a new sadness. The people are poor and the Occupation is pressing them down with taxes; it is spreading fires and preventing people to rebuild in wood under the false pretense to beautify the town. Haitians, let us be firm, let us follow the example of Belgium. No matter if our towns are burned. For it is not a vain thought that was written on the grave of the great Dessalines: 'Upon the first shot the towns disappear and the nation rises.' The holy cause which is spreading in the North has for chiefs men of good sense. The South is waiting for only one man to follow this sublime example. No fear! We have arms! Let us drive out that ravenous people whose ravenousness is represented in the person of their President Wilson, traitor, vagabond, rioter, thief, you will die with your country.

Hurrah for Independence! Hurrah for union! Hurrah for legitimate war! Down with the Americans!

- Caco proclamation, posted in Port-au-Prince, March 15, 1919.

The immediate cause of the resumption of hostilities with the cacos after almost two years of calm has been laid to certain abuses in the system of *corvée*, inherited from the French colonial administration, whereby the Gendarmerie of Haiti undertook a program of widespread repair and construction of roads in Haiti. Under the *corvée* Haitians were required to perform unpaid labor on the roads in their districts, and in this manner some 630 miles of road were constructed or repaired by the Gendarmerie at an average cost of \$205 per mile.

Prior to the Occupation the *corvée* had not been consistently enforced for generations, but in 1916, probably



at the suggestion of the Haitian Minister of Public Works, the system was revived. Smedley Butler described it as a sort of "barn raising" with dances and games in the evenings, and prizes of little flags to hang on gate posts where the roads were particularly well done.<sup>1</sup> With President Dartiguenave he inspected the work from an emblazoned Ford touring car, and the President gave talks of encouragement to the laborers. Men, women and children kept holes in the roads in their district filled with stone and gravel. On January 1, 1918, a caravan of 27 motor cars and trucks headed by the President's Ford, made the 180 mile trip to Cape Haitian from the capital at Port-au-Prince, in 13 hours and 50 minutes, stopping enroute for receptions at six towns. This was probably the first time wheeled vehicles had ever traveled that distance, for in French colonial days there was a gap of about six miles across a swamp that had to be crossed by raft or on horseback.

Initially there had been few complaints about the corvée, but as the work spread into sparsely populated areas laborers were required to work outside their home districts and competition among the various Gendarm units supervising the work at times resulted in men being pushed beyond their endurance, and some were required to exceed the hours of work established by the law. Enforcement of the corvée

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Statement of Brig. Gen. Smedley Butler to Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, Oct. 31, 1921, Micro Copy 610, p. 10.





was a made to order issue for opponents of the Occupation, and stories of its excesses, often greatly exaggerated, spread wildly with dark hints that the corvée was but the opening manifestation of an American desire to restore slavery as an institution in the Black Republic. Those who fled to avoid work on the roads joined the remnants of caco bands in the hills and isolated incidents of terrorism began to be reported. In these circumstances the corvée was ordered abolished on October 1, 1918, though either by a misinterpretation or disobedience of the order it continued in the Maissade-Hinche district of the North until March of the following year.

A very rare commodity in Haitian society during the period under discussion was leadership. The leadership of those opposing the American Occupation was immeasurably strengthened, however, when, on September 3, 1918, a convict persuaded his Gendarme "chaser" at a work project to accompany him in an escape to the hills. This convict was Charlemagne Massena Péralte, a man of great charisma and spiritual intensity who quickly rallied all the cacos of the north under his banner, while vowing to drive the American invaders into the sea.

The Brigade Commander, Colonel Russell, first reported engagements with Charlemagne in October, 1918, when 35 cacos were killed along with 2 Haitian Gendarmes. In what was for him a rare miscalculation, he wrote that "this affair has no political or military significance whatsoever, and repetition



of such raids by bandits hidden away in the hills on the frontier may be expected for some time to come."<sup>2</sup> He estimated the strength of the guerrilla bands at this time to be about 2,000 poorly armed men, whose weapons were mostly machetes, knives, pikes, a few pistols, and perhaps 200 to 300 rifles. They were very short of ammunition, their rifles being almost entirely old German Krags, for which they adapted captured or stolen Gendarmerie ammunition by wrapping goat skin or string around the bases of cartridges. Russell accordingly issued very strict orders concerning the accounting of Gendarme and Marine ammunition.

In spite of their great handicaps, the forces under Charlemagne's command continued to grow. His personal magnetism was such that even prior to the bizarre circumstances which attended his death he assumed the robes of a Messiah in the eyes of the credulous Haitian peasants. By the spring of 1919 his strength had grown to between five and ten thousand, and later in that year it would peak at more than fifteen thousand. At first he was opposed only by the Gendarmerie, but the growing seriousness of the revolt caused the Marine Brigade to be ordered into action beginning in March, 1919. Total Brigade strength at this time, however, was only approximately 1,000 officers and

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<sup>2</sup> U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., Colonel J.H. Russell to Major General Commandant, Oct. 1, 1918.



en, and this meant that after garrison and logistics demands were met only a few hundred marines were available for field operations. Further, few Gendarmerie units could be spared to carry the fight to the cacos, for they were organized to function as an urban and rural police force.

In these circumstances the Brigade Commander made an urgent request in March, 1919, to increase the Brigade by at least one Battalion of Marines. Secretary Lansing, then at the Paris Peace Conference with President Wilson, considered such action politically inexpedient, however. Haiti had already become something of an embarrassment to America on the world stage.

In early October, 1919, Charlemagne with a sizeable army was encamped 15 miles north of Port-au-Prince, and on October 7 a small band of cacos invaded Port-au-Prince and set fire to buildings in the business district and near the foreign legations. The self-styled "Chief of the Revolutionary Forces against the Americans on Haitian Soil" addressed a ultimatum to the diplomatic community in Port-au-Prince, delivered through the British Legation, which demanded the surrender of the Haitian Government to his forces. Marines quickly drove him and his army back into the mountains of the north. A reward of several thousand dollars was placed on Charlemagne's head, and efforts to destroy him were redoubled. The story of his entrapment and death is one of the most thrilling in all of Haiti's dramatic history.





The Commander of the District of Grande Rivière in the north of Haiti in August, 1919, was Herman H. Hanneken, Captain, Gendarmerie d'Haiti, and Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps. One other American served at that post with him, William R. Button, Lieutenant, Gendarmerie d'Haiti, and Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps. Early in the month, Hanneken made an arrangement with a Haitian "ex-General," Jean Conze, a Gendarme named Jean Francois (the "Secretary"), and a third Haitian, Cherubin Blot, to effect the capture of Charlemagne. The scheme was this: the Haitians would establish a camp at Capois, near Grande Rivière, stage mock raids on Gendarmerie outposts in the vicinity, and having established a reputation, invite Charlemagne to participate in a large-scale attack on Grande Rivière. Charlemagne would then be ambushed by Gendarmes brought in from the Cape for that purpose.

As a result of their activity and numerous invitations, Conze and his friends were visited by many minor chiefs in September and October. They entertained lavishly, Hanneken thoughtfully having provided the camp with \$75 worth of tafia (native rum) and \$10 worth of cola. These and other expenses, including blue cloth for caco "uniforms," he paid for from his own pocket.

Early in October the real cacos became suspicious of the camp at Capois, and to save the situation Hanneken made a simulated attack there, during which he pretended to be



ounded. This action and a \$200 subscription to the revolutionary cause, allegedly contributed by sympathizers in Grande Rivière but actually coming from Hanneken's own funds, had the desired effect. On October 26, 1919, Charlemagne and his brother, St-Remy Péralte, with many other chiefs and perhaps 1200 cacos, arrived at Capois.

It was arranged that the attack on Grande Rivière would take place on the night of October 31, and that Charlemagne would await the results of that attack at a place called Mazare, about three miles from the city. Due to the unexpected size of the attacking force, Grande Rivière was secretly reinforced with an additional marine machine gun crew. Early in the evening on October 31, Hanneken and Button, their faces blackened, and wearing old, ragged clothes, took up positions at Mazare with 20 hand-picked gendarmes. Hanneken was armed with a 45 caliber automatic and a 38 caliber revolver. Button carried a Browning automatic rifle. The other men had carbines.

At about 10 o'clock some 700 cacos passed enroute to Grande Rivière. From their ranks dropped Jean Francois, the "Secretary." He informed Hanneken that Charlemagne had had a change of mind and instead of coming to Mazare would await news of the attack at his mountain-top camp, a hard three hour march away. The Secretary had the countersign ("General Jean") and information that Charlemagne had arranged with the attacking force that they would send a detachment up the mountain to inform him when the city had





fallen. Hanneken decided that he and his men would be that detachment. With the Secretary in the lead, they started off and after three hours of difficult mountain climbing they arrived at the first of six outposts guarding the camp. They were halted there while the Secretary hurried on to inform Charlemagne that the detachment from Grand Rivière had arrived. Charlemagne ordered that they report directly to him, and the Secretary returned to tell Hanneken this. He warned him that it would be extremely dangerous to proceed, in view of the numerous posts they would have to pass. Nevertheless they continued, the Secretary still in the lead, followed by Hanneken and then Button, with the Gendarmes bringing up the rear. The first outpost was passed without any trouble, the countersign being given by each man as he hurried by. After walking about five minutes, they were stopped at the second outpost and scrutinized very closely by the caco in charge. Hanneken and Button acted as if they were nearly exhausted, and their act must have been pretty good, for they understood some of the cacos to say "My! but those niggers are tired."

They passed right through the third and fourth outposts, but at the fifth they were halted by a man with a revolver. Hanneken, still pretending to be exhausted, staggered through, but Button was seized by the arm and asked where he had gotten such a nice rifle. He jerked free, however, narrowly avoiding detection, and muttering



some choice Haitian oaths hurried on after Hanneken.

The sixth and last outpost was the immediate guard round the Supreme Chief of the Cacos, who stood next to camp fire about thirty paces distant when Hanneken entered the camp. The Secretary pointed out Charlemagne to Hanneken and then stepped aside. The two marines moved to within about fifteen feet of their quarry before they were stopped by the sound of bolts working in rifles. They immediately opened fire, Hanneken taking deliberate aim at Charlemagne, and Button clearing the camp with his automatic rifle. The gendarmes sprang into action and took up positions to repel any counter-attack.

Charlemagne fell with one of Hanneken's 45 caliber rounds in his heart. Nine other cacos were killed and an undetermined number wounded. Nine serviceable rifles, three revolvers, 200 rounds of ammunition and seven swords were seized, as was a large amount of correspondence.<sup>3</sup>

Hanneken and his men delivered Charlemagne's body to Grande Rivière at 9 o'clock the next morning, after a terrifying but on the whole uneventful journey down the mountain. If they saw spirits and goblins behind every tree, they may be excused. It was, after all, Halloween.

At Grande Rivière the body of the caco chief was laid

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. This account was drawn principally from the action reports filed by Hanneken and his superiors in the Gendarmerie d'Haiti. They are found in the U.S. Marine Corps Records, Correspondence file of the First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.



out on a door, arms outspread, and photographed. Prints of the photo were widely distributed by the Gendarmerie in order to convince the cacos that their mystic leader, who had claimed to be immune from marine bullets, was actually dead. These photos were responsible for the story which later circulated in Haiti that Charlemagne had been crucified by the Americans, a story believed in many Haitian circles to this day, and one which enhanced the Christ image Charlemagne had actively cultivated in life. These photographs of the body spread-eagled on a door eventually reached the United States and gave impetus to atrocity stories coming out of the war.

To thwart voodoo necromancy, Charlemagne's body was buried in a great block of concrete. After the Occupation ended it was disinterred and the remains were given a state funeral. The ceremony became the subject of a famous painting by one of Haiti's most renowned artists.

For their part in the slaying of the caco chief, Hanneken and Button were awarded the Medal of Honor. Sergeant Hanneken was later commissioned in the Marine Corps and retired as a Brigadier General.

The death of Charlemagne virtually ended the war in the north, but his successor, Benoit Batraville, rallied the cacos in the rest of the country and continued the struggle. In the early morning hours of January 15, 1920, he led a large force into Port-au-Prince itself and burned more than a city block in one of the poorer suburbs, Belair. The





Marine garrison routed the cacos, however, killing perhaps 300 in the process. In the weeks that followed the attack on Port-au-Prince the back of the caco movement was broken, and more than 3200 prisoners were taken. Benoit managed to evade his pursuers for months, and in April, 1920, he and his band ambushed a Gendarme patrol and captured its leader, a Marine Sergeant commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Gendarmerie. The marine's fate at the hands of Benoit was reported by a caco defector, an eye witness to what follows.

The marine, Sergeant Muth, was wounded in the ambush but still conscious when examined by Benoit who determined that he was alive. He then nearly severed his head with a war machete. At his direction, a Dominican chief named Franque removed the Sergeant's brain, which was then smeared on the sights of the cacos' rifles, the idea being that this would increase their accuracy. Muth's heart and liver, believed to be the seats of courage and sagacity, were taken out and eaten. There were at least three confirmed reports of cannibalism of Marines during the caco war.

Efforts to track down Benoit were redoubled, and on May 20, 1920, acting on an informer's report, a Marine patrol cornered and shot him in his mountain camp, in circumstances only a little less dramatic than those attending the death of Charlemagne. This signaled the end of the Caco War. The remaining chiefs quietly surrendered and peace was restored to the entire country.



The Marines and the Gendarmes had defeated the cacos in a guerrilla war by adopting a plan of operations which kept their field forces broken up into patrols, 20 to 40 men in strength, which methodically tracked down their enemies in their own terrain. It was the hardest sort of campaigning imaginable. Though greatly outnumbered by the cacos throughout the two year period of hostilities, the Marines and Gendarmes had the decided advantage of better arms, better discipline, and better training. They operated on the cardinal principle of never losing their weapons to the enemy, and consequently there was never any question of being shot with one's own arms. They never alienated the people who lived in the battleground, and in all of the atrocity stories later circulated against them none purports to describe acts of violence taken against a village, or a peasant's shack, or his crops. In retrospect the Caco War seems to have been a remarkably "clean" war. The casualty figures, however, almost defy rational explanation. Seven Marines and twenty-seven Gendarmes were killed in action as opposed to a conservatively estimated ten thousand cacos. Could all of this be attributed to sharp-shooting on the one side, and under-size ammunition wrapped in goat skin on the other? Body count in this war, as it would later in Vietnam, generated a great controversy.

Late in 1919, at the height of the war, the Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps requested that the Haiti Campaign Badge, previously awarded for service in Haiti from





uly 9 to December 6, 1915, be awarded to those Marines  
hen engaged in operations against the cacos. On November  
, 1919, Secretary of the Navy Daniels replied as follows.

It is not considered that the services rendered  
in Haiti since the limiting date in General Order  
305, namely, December 6, 1915, have been sufficient-  
ly hazardous or of the military importance necessary  
to justify an extension of that date.<sup>4</sup>

Haiti already had all the makings of a class "A" polit-  
ical issue, and the Wilson administration had ample reason  
to play down military operations there.

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<sup>4</sup> U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of First  
Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Wash-  
ington, D.C., Secretary of the Navy to Major General Command-  
ant of the Marine Corps, November 6, 1919.



## II. Occupation Diplomacy.

The Haitian Government was painfully surprised at hearing that, in the existing differences between it and the American Minister to Haiti, the Government of the United States only regretted the reason which compelled its representatives to arrive at the grave decision of stopping payment of the salaries of the President of the Republic, the Secretaries of State, and members of the Council of State.

And what is that reason? The non-cooperation of members of the Haitian Government with American officials....

The Haitian Government, much to its regret, can only consider the suspension of payment of the salaries of the President of the Republic and of other members of the Government as an unwarranted coercive measure intended to compel it to adopt financial and other schemes which it regards as absolutely antagonistic to the well considered interests of the Haitian people....

- President Sudre Dartiguenave, Republic of Haiti, to President Woodrow Wilson, United States of America, August 19, 1920.

The adoption of the new Constitution did not, unfortunately, usher in a new era of cooperation between the Haitian Government and Occupation officials. Public works, public health, public safety, the customs, and to a large extent the administration of public finance were now firmly in American hands, but officials frequently found themselves frustrated by Haitian courts and a balking Haitian Government which as often as not refused to provide the enabling legislation necessary for the proper carrying out of "treaty obligations."

Within a few days after the proclaiming of the Constitution, Bailly-Blanchard called on the President of the



Republic and informed him that in the future all legislation bearing in any way on the objects of the treaty must be cleared in advance through the American Legation. Further, the American Legation reserved to itself the right to introduce legislation deemed necessary for the proper observance of the treaty.

In October, 1918, the Financial Adviser, Addison T. Ruan, incensed over persistent irregularities in accounts administered by the Haitian Minister of Finance, demanded that the Council of State enact a law forbidding the Minister to approve vouchers which did not have the Financial Adviser's prior authorization. The Council refused, on the grounds that such was in violation of the Constitution, and the Marine Brigade Commander thereupon ordered the National Bank of Haiti to stop all payments to the Haitian Government. This impasse continued for three months, and finally only ended on the resignation of Mr. Ruan and the arrival of his successor, Mr. John A. McIlhenny. During the disagreement American officials even refused to pay the funeral expenses of the Haitian Minister in Washington, who had died there.

Under McIlhenny financial relationships with the Haitian Government creaked along on more or less an ad hoc basis, but American patience with an evasive and uncooperative administration wore increasingly thin. Things came to a head in August 1920, when, after discussions with Washington, the Financial Adviser abruptly suspended the salaries of senior





Haitian officials, including the President. Dartiguenave appealed directly to President Wilson, and received in reply a lecture delivered by the American Minister in which it was regretted that the close cooperation previously existing between the two governments had recently unfortunately been lacking. Bailly-Blanchard emphasized the importance of strict adherence to treaty agreements, and ended by offering to resume payment of the suspended salaries providing the Haitian Government repealed eleven laws and enacted four. The laws which the United States Government wished to have repealed dealt with such matters as ownership of real estate in Haiti by resident foreigners, the return of sequestered property to Germans, pensions, duties on motor vehicles, trade-marks, mines and mining concessions, preparation of primary school teachers, manual training schools, railroads and tramways, and firearms and ammunition. The laws desired concerned currency reform and the leasing of state lands.

The Haitian Government ultimately surrendered, and thereafter American control of Haitian legislation was assured.

During this general period various financial and commercial arrangements were made. National City Bank assumed total control of the National Bank of Haiti, buying out French interests for \$1.4 million dollars. A claims commission was established to settle foreign claims against the Haitian Government and a bond issue of \$40 million dollars, to be serviced by a first claim on internal revenue and a



second claim on customs receipts, was approved but not immediately placed, due to unfavorable market conditions. A concession for oil exploration was granted to the Sinclair Corporation. A logwood contract negotiated with American interests was rejected by American officials because of its monopolistic features. In all of these matters, great pains were taken to protect the interests of Haiti, and there is virtually no evidence to support the claims that Americans used their positions for personal enrichment, claims that were freely mouthed but ill-substantiated by both Haitian and American critics of the Occupation.

In April, 1921, Edwin Denby, the new Secretary of the Navy, toured Haiti and was, like Franklin Roosevelt before him, favorably impressed with the signs of progress. At the town of Maissade he was surprised to find the village street decorated in his honor with flowers and palms and a triumphal arch bearing the inscription "Vive l'Occupation!" A delegation of local officials, citizens and school teachers, turned out to give him a most cordial welcome. The children sang the Haitian anthem, and then one verse of "America" in English. Flowers were presented to the Secretary, along with a written request for continuance of the Occupation. The same ceremony, with a greater or lesser degree of formality, greeted the Secretary at a number of other towns.<sup>1</sup>

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of the Navy Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of the Navy to Secretary of State, April 6, 1921.









XIII. The Purloined Letter.

From enthusiasm to imposture the step is perilous and slippery; the demon of Socrates affords a memorable instance how a wise man may deceive himself; how a good man may deceive others; how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud.

- Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

The Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1919 was George Barnett, an extremely hard-working and conscientious officer. In September of that year while reviewing the records of courts martial convened by the first Provisional Brigade in Haiti, he was struck by certain allegations made by the defense counsel, one Lieutenant F.L. Spear, in the trial of Privates Walter E. Johnson and John J. McQuilkin, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps. The two men were charged and convicted of having struck Haitian prisoners in their custody, and their defense was that they had done so in obedience to the orders of their superior officer, a Lieutenant Brokaw, Garde d'Haiti, who was a Sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps. Brokaw had later shot and killed the prisoners, but was not tried due to reasons of insanity, for which he was then confined in a mental institution.

The allegations by Lieutenant Spear, who had been in Haiti but a few months and in the Marine Corps less than a year, were that "practically indiscriminate killings of Haitians" had occurred over a period of years. General



Barnett accepted this at face value because, as he later explained, "in all my experience of 44 years in the service I have taken it as a matter of course that a statement made to me by a commissioned officer was true."<sup>1</sup>

The General immediately drafted an official letter to the Brigade Commander in Port-au-Prince, Colonel John H. Russell. Colonel Russell had recently returned to Haiti, at the express request of Secretary of State Lansing, for a second tour as Brigade Commander. By virtue of his prior experience he was considered the most knowledgeable officer in Haitian affairs then in the service, and what was more, he was known to have the confidence of the Haitian Government. General Barnett's letter ordered Russell to take immediate steps to end "unlawful executions of Haitians," and to make a thorough investigation of the charges made by Lieutenant Spear in his argument as defense counsel in the Johnson-McQuillin court martial. This letter was followed up by a second letter marked "personal and confidential" on October 2. Parts of that letter are reproduced below.

My dear Colonel:

Since you left here several things have come to my notice with reference to the affairs in Haiti, especially in relation to the duties of the Gendarmes in the interior. The court-martial of one private for the killing of a native prisoner brought out a

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1. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, statement of Maj. Gen. George Barnett, USMC, to Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, October 24, 1921, Microcopy 610, Vol. 10.





statement by his counsel which showed me that practically indiscriminate killing of natives has gone on for some time....

I was shocked beyond expression to hear of such things and to know that it was at all possible that duty could be so badly performed by Marines of my class....

I want personal instructions sent to every officer and non-commissioned officer, both with the Marines and Gendarmerie, that conditions as shown by the evidence in the trial of the private above referred to must be corrected, and such action cannot be tolerated for a moment; and I want every case thoroughly sifted and the guilty parties brought to justice. I think this is the most startling thing of its kind that has ever taken place in the Marine Corps, and I don't want anything of the kind to happen again. I think, judging by the knowledge gained only from the cases that have been brought before me, that the Marine Corps has been sadly lacking in right and justice, and I look to you to see that this is corrected and corrected at once.<sup>2</sup>

Though the letter had been marked "personal and confidential," General Barnett had a copy of it placed in the official files of the Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, along with a copy of his earlier official letter.

Colonel Russell acknowledged receipt of both letters and began a thorough, but due to certain inherent difficulties in such matters, lengthy investigation. Sworn statements had to be secured from personnel no longer serving in Haiti, transportation arranged, etc. As a consequence, when General Barnett was relieved as Major General Commandant on June 30, 1920, Russell's report of the investigation had still not been received in Washington.

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2. U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., Maj. Gen. George Barnett to Col. John H. Russell, Oct. 2, 1919.



By then, the performance of American Marines in Haiti, and the Wilson Administration's responsibilities associated herewith, had become a first class, front page, political issue. Wilsonian idealism, of which the country was perhaps growing a little tired as his second term neared an end, was dragged gleefully through the mire of Haiti. The most lurid tales, the most baseless charges, circulated as gospel. People seemed prepared to swallow anything, provided it was damning to America, or to America's armed forces. But then, even General Barnett, with his 44 years of service, had been quick to believe the worst.

The summit of irresponsible journalism was probably reached by Mr. Herbert J. Seligman in his article "The Conquest of Haiti," which appeared in The Nation on July 10, 1920. Mr. Seligman had made a brief visit to Haiti earlier in the year and he returned to the United States nearly rabid on the subject of American Marines.

The history of the American invasion of Haiti is only additional evidence that the United States is among those Powers in whose international dealings democracy and freedom are mere words, and human lives negligible in face of racial snobbery, political chicane, and money. The five years of American Occupation, from 1915 to 1920, have served as a commentary upon the white civilization which still burns black men and women at the stake. For Haitian men, women, and children, to a number estimated at 3,000, innocent for the most part of any offense, have been shot down by American machine guns and rifle bullets; black men and women have been put to torture to make them give information; theft, arson, and murder have been committed almost with impunity upon the persons and property of Haitians by white men wearing the uniforms of the United States.... In this five years'





massacre of Haitians less than twenty Americans have been killed or wounded in action....

The Haitians in whose service United States marines are presumably restoring peace and order in Haiti are nicknamed "Gooks" and have been treated with every variety of contempt, insult, and brutality....

This militarist, imperialist burlesque on the profession with which the United States entered the war in behalf of weaker states leaves the Haitians little to do but to wonder what the United States intends.... In the absence of any plans for Haiti's regeneration except through "development" of the country by exploiters, the Haitian may derive what spiritual nourishment he can from the Wilsonian phrases with which the United States thuggery disguises its deeds.<sup>3</sup>

"The Conquest of Haiti" created a sensation. The State and Navy Departments were flooded with demands for information. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People denounced the administration's policy in Haiti. It being an election year, and Senator Harding knowing an issue when he saw one, a chorus of Republican demands for investigation of the "Haiti Scandal" soon filled the land. General Barnett was recalled to Washington from his home at Huntley, Virginia, arriving on the night train early in the morning of September 18, 1920. In obedience to orders from Josephus Daniels, he spent the day compiling a report of Marine activities in Haiti during his tenure as Major General Commandant. Documenting that report were copies of his correspondence with Colonel Russell, including the

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. Herbert J. Seligman, "The Conquest of Haiti," The Nation, July 10, 1920.



"personal and confidential" letter of October 2, 1919. The complete report was delivered to the Secretary of the Navy that evening, in the presence of the Assistant Secretary, General Lejeune, and Mr. Daniel's public relations assistant, Mr. Jenkins.

It appears now that Mr. Jenkins was one of those individuals who recognize higher duty when they see it. It was his responsibility, of course, to read the report and help prepare the Secretary to adequately field the questions of journalists. What he thought when he stumbled across General Barnett's "practically indiscriminate killing of natives" is not known, but on the basis of circumstantial evidence, opportunity, and philosophical inclination, he is a prime suspect in the mystery of who leaked the General's letters to The New York Times.

When the story broke, in the middle of October, just a few weeks before the election, General Barnett was enroute to the West Coast. Secretary Daniel's summons reached him in Chicago, and he caught the next train east. The meeting between the Secretary of the Navy and the late Major General Commandant was a memorable one.

"Mr. Daniels, I see in the morning papers that you have stated that you never saw my letter until it was published."

"I never saw it."

"Excuse me, Sir, but you did see it."

"I never saw it."



"You did."

"Of course, General, if you say I saw it I must have seen it, but I forgot it."

"You did not say that you had forgotten it, but that you had never seen it."<sup>4</sup>

A Naval Court of Inquiry, headed by Rear Admiral Henry Mayo, was immediately appointed to investigate the performance of the Marines in Haiti. It met in Washington in October and journeyed to Haiti shortly thereafter, arriving in Port-au-Prince on November 8, aboard the USS Niagara. Republicans and editorialists in The Nation charged "white-wash" before the first witnesses appeared before the Court. The Findings of the Inquiry, when they were released, after the Republican victory at the polls, were interpreted as nearly complete vindication of American military conduct in Haiti. The Court found that two unjustifiable homicides and sixteen other serious acts of violence against citizens of Haiti had occurred during the period 1915-1920, and that in every case those responsible had been brought to trial before a general court martial, convicted and sentenced. It further found that there were no proper grounds for the statement that "practically indiscriminate killings of natives has been going on for sometime." General Barnett, perhaps properly, took this last as a rebuke

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Statement of Maj. Gen. George Barnett, USMC, to Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, Oct. 24, 1921, Micro Copy 10, Vol. 10.





to himself, and later petitioned Mr. Daniels to state publicly that he had not been reprimanded. The Secretary of the Navy, however, was terrible in his righteousness and there is no record that he ever again addressed himself to the General after their little disagreement.



XIV. The Mistreated Missionary.

While Haiti's fertile soil now needs,  
Keen human skill to till it;  
What Haiti needs above all things,  
Is Christian love to fill it.  
God give thee health, and strength and grace  
And favor with the Nation;  
And never hide thee from His Face,  
But show thee His salvation.  
Go brother, tell them of the Light,  
And of the Life Eternal;  
That's offered unto black and white,  
In the bright world supernal.  
We know, God shall be glorified  
Whatever the condition;  
With such a servant, true and tried,  
Out in the Haiti Mission.  
And if you'll not return to tell  
The thrilling Haiti Story,  
May God "who doeth all things well"  
Grant us to meet in Glory.

- Cynonfardd, "Prospectus for Proposed Evangelization of the Over Six Million Christless Negroes of Haiti and Liberia."

On October 25, 1920, the Republican National Committee retained a lawyer to assist a Baptist Missionary in his efforts to "prevent any further suppression of the facts by Secretary Daniels or any other board which the present Administration may create in its efforts to meet the charges of Senator Harding."<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful if anyone was a greater thorn in the side of the American Occupation in Haiti during the last dozen years or so of its existence than the Reverend L. J. Evans, missionary in the Welsh Baptist Church. His

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<sup>1</sup>. The New York Herald, October 25, 1920.





letters, and newspaper accounts of public appearances paint a picture of a man who, in the latter stages of his life, was irrational in the extreme, a fanatic who became almost incoherent when he spoke or wrote on the subject of his Haitian "ordeal" at the hands of Americans in the Occupation. Yet for all this, he managed to fill a file of correspondence and reports at the Navy Department, and another at the State Department. In 1931 a bill, S.2359, "For the relief of L. Ton Evans, General Missionary, and family, Haiti Mission, and proposed American Christian Industrial Tuskegee," was considered by the United States Congress. Had it passed, he would have received \$300,000. Throughout his long life, he wrote and talked to anyone and everyone who would listen concerning his Haitian experiences. A public figure who made the mistake of replying to his shotgun correspondence would thereafter be listed as not only a close personal friend of the pastor, but irrevocably aligned with him on every conceivable issue. David Lloyd George, Theodore Roosevelt, several American Secretaries of State, and numerous Senators and Representatives found themselves in that embarrassing position, often for no other reason than that a courtesy had been paid in acknowledging one of Mr. Evans' communications.

L. Ton Evans was born in Wales, in 1863, the son of a wealthy saloon keeper. After graduating from the Haverford-West Baptist Seminary in 1887, he became the organizing secretary of the District Gospel Temperance Council in his



home town. What his father (who by then had prospered to the extent of owning a brewery) thought of his son's aberration, is not known. After various short-lived assignments in Wales, during which he made a name for himself as a booze fighter, his Church allowed him to travel in the Holy Land. He returned from that journey to accept, in 1892, the position of General Missionary of the Jamaica Missionary Board in Haiti, and for two years he performed missionary work in the Black Republic, at acmel.

From 1894 to 1902 he was again in Wales, engaged as before in Temperance activities. He then received a call to the First Baptist Church, in Edwardsville, Pennsylvania. While there, "believing in a Republican form of government," he took out United States citizenship papers. His aversion to alcohol almost provoked armed conflict in the small Pennsylvania town, and at one point his church was actually set on fire, presumably by the pro-whisky crowd. In 1908 he resigned his charge to become Field Secretary of the Baptist Mission in Haiti, spending four years in that post before returning to another small church in Pennsylvania. During this period he began his career as an avid letter writer on the subject of Haiti, and he consistently spoke out in favor of American intervention "in the name of humanity" to end the senseless bloodshed he was witness to here.

He returned to Haiti for a third and last time on



Thanksgiving Day, November 29, 1917, as the Superintendent of the Lott Carey Convention, a Baptist missionary group affiliated with and supported by an association of southern negro churches. On landing in Haiti, Evans was immediately struck by the great changes wrought by the Occupation. As he later testified before the Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, these changes went beyond roads and sanitation projects. The restoration of order, he believed, had actually transformed the life of the people, so that where once there had been terror and bolted doors and shutters there was now peace and quiet, and pleasant, placid faces.

About six months after this return to Haiti, Pastor Evans made an inspection trip to certain churches in the north of Haiti, and one afternoon as he was leaving St. Raphael with two Haitian churchmen he encountered two white men on horseback, who appeared to be experiencing some difficulty in maintaining their seats. One of the horsemen was identified by Pastor Evans' companions as the Gendarmerie Chief in St. Raphael. The renowned temperance fighter was mortified that a fellow representative of the United States should be seen in public in such a disgraceful condition. He said as much to the Brigade Commander, Colonel Russell, several weeks later during the course of an office call on the Colonel. His disclosure brought three quick results: (1) reprimand of the Gendarmerie officer, Second Lieutenant Asel H. Haug; (2) an order directing that the sale of alcoholic beverages to Marines in Haiti be forbidden; and (3)





a complaint filed in the Haitian Court of First Instance at Cape Haitian by Lieutenant Haug charging the Reverend J. Ton Evans with "slanderous denunciation."

On July 13, 1918, Evans wrote to the Haitian judge who had issued a summons that he appear in court to answer the charge.

Judge P.J.M. Obas, Juge d'Instruction au Tribunal Civil, etc.

Dear Sir:

I received your "mandate" to appear at your court on the 29th instant, to be interviewed and questioned about somebody, etc.

I shall be very glad if you will be so kind as to inform me definitely as to the name of the person and the exact nature of the complaint, or alleged charge to have been made in reference to myself which is a United States Citizen and also in my position as General Secretary and Superintendent of the Baptist Mission Work in Haiti and representing some 3,000,000 negro Baptist and practically something like 6,000,000 more white Baptists of America as I do - I am entitled to this definite information from you and your Court.

I must say, however, that I have already planned to leave with my wife if possible by a Panama Steamer leaving Port au Prince by the end of this month on official business to see my Missionary Board in the States as well as to visit our President, Woodrow Wilson, at Washington, it will be impossible for me to visit the Cape at the time you mention.

I should also add that I have planned for a conference at Port au Prince with the Minister and our United States Superintendent of Instruction, who will arrange with Colonel Russell of the Occupation and probably the President of Haiti, if not, National Council Remy, explaining to them the project of a proposed "National and Industrial College," the petition for which I took to the United States seven years ago, as, perhaps, the Judge knows.

After the definite information asked, I may arrange what steps and when, I shall take on the return which I expect will be in October of this year.<sup>2</sup>

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2. U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of the First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.



The letter was signed "yours very sincerely, L. Ton Evans, (For Christ and Haiti)." The busy missionary then made his visit to the United States, and apparently forgot all about the summons to appear in court.

On December 28, 1918, Evans having returned from the United States, the Haitian wheels of Justice took another turn, and a warrant for his arrest was issued by the Court of First Instance at St. Marc, where he then resided. What happened next is described in the missionary's own words in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, dated November 9, 1922.

1. ... This arrest took place Saturday afternoon, of December 28, 1918 - by a ruthless invasion of Missionary's private study, at the home of Madame Orius Paultre (widow of late President Judge Paultre) and family at Saint Marc, by the armed Corporal (native) of Saint Marc, Gendarmerie - at the command of his white Captain Fitzgerald Brown, and while the Missionary Superintendent was peacefully pursuing his sacred Mission, and planning for native Churches and their Evangelical Schools, in ile Gonave - and other places in Haiti, and while being in the very act of typing addresses on envelopes to be distributed to members of Churches, and branch mission stations the following Sabbath morning.

2. The mere request of Missionary, to the armed native Corporal as to his Authority, and Right of forced intrusion upstairs to his private Study, and for production of his warrant showing cause of his arrest, was subsequently at the Gendarmerie headquarters construed by the excited American white Captain, under influence of liquor into a Rebellion against Public Authority.

3. Following the negro armed Corporal, who was also excited and somewhat savage - through liquor - the Missionary descended the stairway stepping to the open street, to find himself instantly surrounded by a heavy armed guard, of about a dozen Gendarmes. The little negro Corporal roughly snatched the shade (parasol) from the hands of the missionary superintendent - as he opened it to protect himself under





a broiling tropical sun - amid the cries of SHAME from the other armed natives who said "Let the Missionary have his parasol." He was immediately hurried through the public streets, past his Church, exposed to the scorching sun before the terror stricken natives, who fled to hide in fear, and trembling; many of whom were sobbing aloud. His further Request on passing his Church and in front of the door of the house of one of his native Deacons (and by this convinced he was being led to prison, if not to be shot) to hand over the key to his locked study, so as to return same to native Dr. Hector Paultre (Clerk of local Church and Gonave mission) for the distribution of his addressed envelopes on Sabbath morning (next day) was not only savagely denied, but intentionally DISTORTED (as declared by Haiti's Superior Court) at the same Gendarmerie headquarters, and by the same white, excited, cursing, and liquor-soaked American Captain, and United States Marine officer into AN ATTEMPT of the Missionary TO ESCAPE FROM JUSTICE.

4. On arrival at headquarters of Saint Marc's Gendarmerie, Captain Brown, who had hurriedly drawn up the so-called two CHARGES, excitedly, and rapidly read and hurled them (amid oaths, and threats of being shot, repeatedly aiming to lay hold of his loaded rifle) at the American Missionary as he stood in front of the Captain, and surrounded by the armed negro Gendarmes. After further insults, threats, and cursing him for his efforts to Christianize, educate and industrially and morally develop "the low down, dirty, and damned niggers of Haiti" this United States Marine Officer, assured the American Missionary - they (Captain Brown, General Alexander Williams, Major Welles, Lieutenant Haug, and other conspirators, it was understood) would not only discredit, but degrade, and absolutely crush him, and after an additional volley of oaths, and while raving like a drunken maniac, all the while laying hold of gun declaring I should be shot - he finally yelled "Away with the villain, to prison." The Missionary was dumbfounded at such a treatment, and sad humiliating spectacle - in striking contrast with that of Captain Brown's immediate predecessor - Captain Kinney, who himself had not only personally complimented the Missionary on his excellent work, and splendid influence among the natives, and Gendarmes - but as an expression of gratitude personally and voluntarily gave a special Official permit for him, and his trained Missionary wife, to conduct Sunday Religious services to prisoners at Saint Marc old prison.

5. No sooner than the prison was reached, than the



American Missionary was searched, every article such as Bible, glasses, photographs of wife, and little boys, photograph of United States President with official document from U.S. PRESIDENT and State Department, etc., were taken from him after which he was thrust - that same Saturday afternoon - into a small, narrow, negro, slave, death-cell (of old French Colonial days) the heavy bar drawn with a tremendous thud, so, as to strike terror no doubt into the poor superintendent Missionary's heart.

6. Here, now he remained cut off from Family, Native Christians and the whole world - for 13 days, and 12 longest and darkest nights of his life, with armed negro pacing constantly before the small thick door of his dark dungeon, lying on hard bare floor of the old death-cell, hat in hand - panting for a breath of air; and amid the heart-breaking groans, and yells of something like 180 negro prisoners, (including the females, mothers, and even babes), many of whom being beaten, and tortured to death; then would follow scuffling, marching, and heavy trampling as if wounded and dead were hurriedly and secretly carried away in the dark; and all the while the Missionary startled as the flash of the armed guard's small lantern was turned upon the narrow and tiny aperture (called window) near top of his cell-door, and he heard the tramp of his feet - believing that the American Captain, and United States Marine officer in one of his drunken orgies, while entertaining his reputed drunken superior officers (General Williams, Major Welles, etc.) had at last given the stern command to drag the Christian Missionary from his dungeon before a firing squad as done with other prisoners in Saint Marc, and other Haitian prisons at this time without any pretense of trial....<sup>3</sup>

The above tale, embellished and re-embellished, with some details added and others dropped, became the Reverend J. Ton Evans' standard sermon, and no doubt the poor old man believed the horror he had conjured up for himself. Certainly, many of his readers and listeners believed it. The

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<sup>3</sup> U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.





records of the St. Marc Gendarmerie show that he was in fact confined in civil prison there from December 28, 1918 to January 9, 1919, and that he was provided with a mattress, a pillow, and a blanket - conveniences not furnished other prisoners or required to be furnished by Haitian law.

While in prison his sponsor, the North Carolina Mutual and Provident Association of Durham, discontinued its support of his missionary activity, citing his political activity and threatening letters he had written to President Wilson. Among other things, the Association wrote "we want you to understand that the American Negro stands loyally behind the President and his action in shaping the destiny of Haiti, which is under our protection, and it places us in a very embarrassing position as a convention to be called in question as to our loyalty to the nation in a time like this.... It is not in the minds of the American negroes to undertake to shape the political policy of an independent country of which they know very little, especially in opposition to the American nation."<sup>4</sup>

At his hearing before the Court of First Instance at Cape Haitian on January 20, 1919, Pastor Evans recounted his story with the aid of an interpreter. After many years of missionary work in Haiti, he could speak neither French

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. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, North Carolina Mutual and Provident Association to Rev. L. L. Evans, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 7.





for the native Creole. Lieutenant Haug, perhaps influenced by his superiors, dropped charges against him and he was released. He left Haiti shortly after and never returned. The story he later told that he had been awarded a judgment by the Haitian Supreme Court in the amount of \$100,000 for false imprisonment had no basis in fact, though he enlarged and pressed that claim for years and, as previously stated, eventually saw it carried to the floor of the United States Congress.

He was violently anti-Catholic, and in speeches and printed material he often compared the influence of the French clergy in Haiti to that of Rasputin in imperial Russia. His prejudices were so open and so frequently expressed that it is difficult to see how his testimony on anything could be accepted at face value, and yet on Haitian matters he became a "resident expert" for those attacking the Occupation.

The Reverend L. Ton Evans never realized his dream of establishing in Haiti his "American Christian Industrial Askegee." His obsessed hatred of the Marines of the Occupation probably contributed to the physical and mental collapse which forced his early retirement from the service of his Church. His last years were spent in Wyoming, Pennsylvania, and he died there a bitter and broken old man whose longed-for martyrdom had somehow managed to elude him in that narrow prison cell at St. Marc.



W. The Senate Select Committee.

My dear Sir:

Some days ago I overheard the following conversation:

A. What do you think of the Hayti business?

B. Oh, I don't know.

A. Well, I will tell you this. A few years ago on a trip East, I met in the Broad Street Station at Philadelphia, an old friend of mine, an officer in the Marines. In reply to the question, as to what he was doing there, he said: "I am about to entrain a battalion of Marines for Hayti. There is some trouble down there, and official orders are to go down there and straighten things out. Unofficial orders are to kill every G..D... nigger that comes in sight."

Later I approached "A" telling him of what I overheard and asked if I might quote him. His answer was "Not by a d... sight."

This may or may not have value to you. I send it as it may be of some use.

The remarkable letter quoted above, which might be described as hearsay thrice removed, was forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy by Senator Medill McCormick on October 21, 1921, with a terse "I think this is of enough moment for you to read it through." The Senator had received it from James Weldon Johnson, Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who in turn had received it from a Mr. James Harold Coleman of New York, not otherwise identified.

James Weldon Johnson had been meddling in Haitian





politics for more than a year. In April, 1920, he visited Port-au-Prince in company with Mr. Herbert J. Seligman, an associate in the NAACP, a Socialist, and a contributing editor with The Nation, whose article "The Conquest of Haiti" has already been referred to. In Port-au-Prince Mr. Johnson and Mr. Seligman closely associated themselves with the political opposition to the Dartiguenave Government, and especially with a newly organized group called the Union Patriotique, which was headed by George Sylvain, . Pauleus Sannon, Sténio Vincent, and Percival Thoby. The Union Patriotique claimed to represent virtually all of the Haitian people, but it is doubtful if it ever counted more than 10,000 adherents at the most. Its leaders were, however, articulate and literate men, and it is not surprising that they found in Mr. Johnson and Mr. Seligman kindred spirits.

On their return to the United States, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Seligman persuaded friends at The Nation, Oswald Garrison Villard and Dr. Ernest H. Greuning, to aid them in welding together the resources of The Nation, the NAACP, and the Union Patriotique, into the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society, an organization whose purpose it would be to lobby and agitate for the immediate withdrawal of marines, the re-establishment of constitutional government, and the negotiation of equitable treaties in those unfortunate republics.

Moral and limited financial support began to flow to



the Union Patriotique from this organization in the United States, and President Dartiguenave, believing his political opposition to be subversive in character, complained. There was little, however, that Occupation authorities could do, given the current atmosphere in the United States.

In December 1920, and again in February 1921, demands were made in the United States Congress for a congressional investigation of affairs in Haiti. The elections were over, however, and it seems likely that a grumbling acceptance of the in-house Navy Department inquiries would eventually have come to pass (Rear Admiral Knapp and General Lejeune, USMC, had made reports separate from that of the Mayo Court), had it not been for the arrival in May 1921, of a delegation representing the Union Patriotique. The avowed purpose of this delegation was to present a "Memoire" to the American Government reviewing the history of the intervention as seen through its eyes, and enumerating certain demands the United States was expected to meet forthwith. In tone the memoire was such that it might have leapt from the typewriting machine of the Reverend L. Ton Evans, with editorial assistance from the staff of The Nation. A few lines will suffice to show the level on which it was composed.

... The American officers of the Gendarmerie are privates (in the American Marine Corps) who have been made officers in Haiti, and who have had nothing but a most elementary education, which naturally renders them incapable of any military



training.... The ghastly mortality in the prisons together with confirmation by survivors reveals a record of atrocities, of brutality, and cruelty which defies description. It is a record for which it would be difficult to find a parallel.... It is the most terrible regime of military autocracy which has ever been carried out in the name of the great American democracy.... The Haitian people, during these past five years, has passed through such sacrifices, tortures, destructions, humiliations, and misery as have never before been known in the course of its unhappy history.<sup>1</sup>

The delegates of the Union Patriotique were refused a formal hearing by the State Department, which was of course the proper and diplomatic thing to do, the recognized Haitian Government already being duly represented in Washington. This refusal, however, brought strong protest from respectable sources. The complete text of the "Memoire" was published in The Nation, and the lead editorial in that same issue asserted that "no impartial reader of the Haitian memoire will doubt the truth of its charges," and warned that "Haiti must not become either America's Belgium or America's Ireland."<sup>2</sup> Echoes of this sentiment converged in Washington from Church Federations, Negro Groups, and various Pacifist Organizations.

On August 5, 1921, pursuant to a resolution of the Senate, a Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo began hearings in Washington. The Committee was chaired by

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<sup>1</sup> Union Patriotique, "Memoire," The Nation, May 25, 1921.  
<sup>2</sup> The Nation, editorial, May 25, 1921.





Medill McCormick (Republican, Illinois), and initially its members were: Philander C. Knox (Republican, Pennsylvania), Tasker Oddie (Republican, Nevada), Atlee Pomerene (Democrat, Ohio), and William H. King (Democrat, Utah). Before it appeared virtually all the leading figures of the American intervention. Admiral Caperton came, his mind not as sharp as it once had been, repeatedly finding it necessary to refer to his voluminous notes and records. Mr. Roger L. Farnham, rich, successful, recently made a senior Vice President of the National City Bank, put in an appearance to explain the tangled web of Haiti's pre-Intervention finances. The Reverend L. Ton Evans, eyes flashing, voice quavering, read into the record his Haitian sermons, and exasperated the Chairman on more than one occasion when he could not be made to give an intelligible answer to questions of fact. Smedley Butler regaled the Senators with his little bits of Haitiana, disguising the steely underside of his character that had earned him the nickname "Old Gimlet Eye" in the Corps. General Barnett tried and failed to make himself look something other than a fool over the "practically indiscriminate killing" statement. Hundreds of pages of testimony were taken. Those who appeared before the Committee were subjected to questioning not only by the Committee itself, but, remarkably, by a lawyer, Mr. Ernest Angell, representing the Haitian Santo Domingo Independence Society, the NAACP, and the Lion Patriotique.



On November 16, the Hearings adjourned in Washington, and the Committee journeyed to Port-au-Prince. When the senators arrived there, on November 29, they were greeted by carefully staged demonstrations, and banners and posters were displayed which asked, in English, "Shall Haiti Be Your Belgium?" and "Shall Haiti Be Your Ireland?" These demonstrations were almost certainly a tactical error on the part of the Union Patriotique, which took credit for their organization, and Medill McCormick, for one, was openly angered by them.

Hearings were held in Port-au-Prince and in various other Haitian cities through the first week in December, 1921, after which the Committee traveled on to Santo Domingo. Senator McCormick, who spoke fluent French, often dispensed with the services of an interpreter at sessions he chaired, and found occasion to criticize the almost total absence of French-speaking officers in the Occupation forces. The case against the Occupation presented by the Union Patriotique was in general a very weak one, with a great deal of the Committee's time taken up by witnesses who gave obviously coached and frequently hearsay testimony on such subjects as stolen mules, drunken marines, and the decline in public morals. Much of the testimony presented subtly backfired. Dr. George Sylvain, President of the Union Patriotique, made certain remarks concerning the failure of the Occupation to adequately support the Haitian educational system, and stated with some degree of pride





that Haiti had practiced compulsory education since 1864. Questioned further, however, he agreed that only two percent of Haiti's people were able to read and write. What commentary on Haitian administration!

Also in Haiti at this time was Dr. Ernest Greuning. He called on Colonel Russell, who noted in the Brigade Commander's Daily Diary Report that "Mr. Greuning, I am afraid, has come to Haiti with the idea of not seeing anything good, but only looking for something sensational to write up for his paper."<sup>3</sup> From informers it was learned that at the homes of opposition leaders Dr. Greuning made anti-American and incendiary speeches during his stay in the Haitian capital. On his return to the United States he put together a documented narrative titled "Conquest of Haiti and Santo Domingo" which was published in The New York Times Current History. The article followed Mr. Seligman's line and was equally as sensational.

When the Committee returned to Washington, about the middle of December, 1921, a preliminary report of its findings was released in the form of a brief statement to the press.

The members of the Committee are unanimous in the belief that the presence of the small American force in Haiti is as necessary to the peace and

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<sup>3</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Daily Diary Report, First Provisional Brigade of Marines in Haiti, November 10, 1921, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 8.



development of the country as are the services to the Haitian Government of the American officials appointed under the treaty of 1915. There can be no abrogation of the treaty, and at this time no diminution of the small force of marines.

It is important that steps should be taken forthwith to co-ordinate the labors of the representatives of the U.S. Government in Haiti, and of the so-called American treaty officials. There should be appointed a Special Representative of the President, a High Commissioner, in whom should be vested the usual diplomatic powers of an envoy extraordinary, and to whom, furthermore, all the American officials appointed under the treaty, as well as the commandant of the Marine Brigade, should look for direction and guidance. The members of the Committee know of no reason why the duties of the Financial Adviser and the Collector of Customs should not be discharged by one person.<sup>4</sup>

Senator McCormick expanded on these recommendations in a letter to the Secretary of State, Mr. Charles Evan Hughes, on December 14, 1921. Stating that from his observations of the Haitian people were "wretchedly poor" and that their merchants were suffering, he urged that the long pending plan be concluded without further delay. He suggested that American assistance was necessary in both the administration of Haitian justice and the support of education, while recognizing the silence of the treaty in these areas. He thought that tariff advantages similar to those granted Cuba were justified for Haiti, in view of the responsibilities and authority assumed by the United States there. He concluded by asserting that "any policy which we lay

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<sup>4</sup> U. S., National Archives, Naval Records Collection, Subject File, Haiti, 1911-1927, Record Group 45, Press Release of the Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, undated, (December 14?, 1921).



down in all probability cannot bear full fruit in Haiti during the lifetime of one or two administrations in Washington. It is for this reason that the members of the Senate Committee hope that their report when it is published will serve to remove American policy in Haiti from the field of partisan controversy."<sup>5</sup>

The preliminary report was not well received by the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society, especially in view of the fact that additional hearings in Washington had been promised so that its counsel might sum up the argument for the "prosecution." These were held, and a list of nine immediate and five ultimate "demands" were read into the record. If met, these demands would have resulted in the immediate termination of the American Occupation, punishment of individuals found guilty of dereliction of duty, and restoration of that democratic form of government presumed to have been functioning in Haiti prior to the landing of American marines. "By sheer force of arms, unjustified by any wrong committed or threatened to our own country, or to any other country, we have crushed the independence of another people, stamped out by force, and by clever devices bearing the pious sanctity of law, every vestige of native self-government, every possibility of effective opposition to alien intrusion and domination.

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<sup>5</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Senator Medill McCormick to Secretary of State, December 14, 1921, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 9.





we have made of Haiti a vassal, a stepping stone under our southward marching absorption of Central America."<sup>6</sup>

The Committee's final report, when it was published late in 1922, contained over 1800 pages of transcript. Its conclusions were relatively brief, and its recommendations did not go much beyond those put forth in the preliminary report. It was stated that the Committee believed that American officials had exercised undue influence in the choice of a Haitian Government and in the ratification of the 1915 treaty. The Committee expressed its chagrin at the improper or criminal conduct of some few members of the Marine Corps in Haiti, but then went on to take a decided swipe at the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society and The Nation, by saying that it found it to be its duty to condemn the process by which biased or interested individuals and committees and propagandists have seized on isolated instances, or have adopted as true any rumor however vile or baseless in an effort to bring into general disrepute the whole American naval force in Haiti. The Committee wishes to express its admiration for the manner in which our men accomplished their dangerous and delicate task."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Statement of Ernest Angell before the Senate Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, June 15, 1922, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Report of the Senate Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 11.



On July 7, 1922, Mr. Moorefield Storey of Boston, an old friend of Secretary of State Hughes, wrote a personal letter to the Secretary in which he castigated him for his support of the Administration's Haitian policy. In a postscript to the letter he added something which expressed the remarkable sentiment shared by those who remained unconvinced by the Senate Select Committee's report.

If you quote to me the report of the Senate Committee I can only say that it was composed of Republicans and Democrats, that both parties are equally responsible for what has been done and is doing in Haiti, and that in these circumstances neither could criticize the other, and such a report as they made was inevitable, but from reading the evidence before the Committee it seems to me unwarranted.<sup>8</sup>

Presumably, the only unbiased investigation possible could have to be that conducted by non-Republicans and non-Democrats (the editorial staff of The Nation?). Mr. Hughes replied sharply to this letter, thus alienating the first of many left-of-center friends and former associates who tried to use their personal acquaintanceship with the Secretary to influence him in political matters.

Senator McCormick's wish for an end in partisan politics concerning the Haitian policy was not to be. Senators Cudahy and King soon found that Haiti was an issue that was eminently political, and they proceeded to take advantage

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8. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 9.





of that fact. Their role in keeping the Haitian controversy alive will be taken up later, after an examination has been made of developments in Haiti itself.



V. The High Commissioner.

... I am troubled to see that you have appointed Brigadier General Russell as a virtual dictator in Haiti. Was it not he who carried out the Wilson policy which you so uncompromisingly condemned? Is it not he whom the Haitians hold responsible not only as the agent of higher authorities in jamming alien rule down their throats, but for much oppression and cruelty in the process? I cannot but feel that to the Haitians this appointment will nullify all your efforts toward mutual understanding. I am therefore taking the liberty of enclosing the leading article in the Times Current History, in the hope that it may present a view which will be useful in checking information you receive through official channels.

No one who knows you even as I as a mere boy knew you in Marion can doubt the essential humanity of your purpose and your loyalty to American traditions. May I urge that you now have an opportunity to re-establish the faith and confidence not only of Americans in our own traditions but of the weaker peoples in us? Few deeds would, I think, speak more clearly of peace and justice than restoration of full sovereignty to Haiti as a precedent to whatever further negotiations may seem desirable. Surely American help to the weak ought not to mean American coercion of them.

- Norman Thomas to President Warren G. Harding,  
March 7, 1922.

It had been the unconcealed hope of the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society to have one of its own named the High Commissioner to Haiti, and an active campaign started to boost James Weldon Johnson for that post. Disappointment that was felt when Colonel John H. Russell promoted to Brigadier General and designated High Commissioner is therefore understandable. What The Nation did not know, however, was that none other than Smedley Butler had been the Harding Administration's first choice



to act as High Commissioner. At the urging of Senators who had served on the Select Committee, Colonel Russell's name was substituted at virtually the last moment. At no time did there seem to be serious consideration given to filling the post with a civilian appointee. It was not thought proper to insert a civilian in the military chain of command running from the Brigade Commander to the Navy Department.

Colonel Russell, who was on leave in the United States when his appointment was announced, spent some weeks in the Department of State prior to returning to Haiti and participated in the drafting of a new scheme of organization for the treaty services and the Haitian Government. His new plan was designed to enhance American control, but at the same time make it possible for the Occupation to be withdrawn with the minimum disruption in the functions of government. Essentially, two parallel organizations were conceived, with all connections between the two made through, and only through, the High Commissioner. Haitian cabinet ministers would be limited in their functions to giving advice to the President, who would then, if he saw fit, transmit that advice to the Commissioner. The position of these ministers would be made one of great honor and dignity, but of little power and authority. The American officers actually conducting the affairs of the Republic of Haiti, from the Commissioner to the junior, would be kept in the background and their Haitian counterparts pushed to the





fore. It was thought that at least at the outset, American influence in those areas not touched upon in the treaty, specifically the courts and public education, should be exercised through the President.

Russell's appointment as High Commissioner was announced by President Harding on February 11, 1922, and exactly one month later he arrived in Port-au-Prince on a battleship provided at the express request of the State Department.

He immediately issued orders which implemented the plan worked out in Washington, and which gave the treaty organization something of the character of a military commander's staff. All correspondence addressed to either the United States Government or the Haitian Government, or to other treaty departments on matters other than routine, were henceforth to be transmitted through the office of the High Commissioner. All policy statements would come from him alone. All projects of law and budgetary proposals had to be cleared by the High Commissioner. He assumed responsibility for resolving matters in dispute between either the Haitian Government and a treaty official or between different treaty departments, with the American State Department reserved as a court of last resort. Inevitably the new system tended to divorce advisers from their respective Haitian ministries, and made it impossible for an American official to line up on the wrong side of a dispute with the Haitian Government. The treaty organization was thus immeasurably strengthened, but at the expense of a Haitian Government which grew in-



creasingly feeble.

Other changes growing out of the Senate Committee's recommendations were made in Washington. The Navy Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs, which previously exercised a strong voice in Occupation matters, was abolished, and the Department's role was for all practical purposes reduced to the detailing of personnel and administration of the First Provisional Brigade of Marines. Authority was thus almost wholly centralized in the State Department's Division of Latin American Affairs. In January, 1924, the two offices of Financial Adviser and General Receiver were combined.

In the meantime, President Dartiguenave, taking advantage of the transitory provisions in the Constitution of 1918, had failed to name the date for legislative elections in the even years 1920 and 1922. He was encouraged in this policy by the American Government, which recognized that under existing conditions in Haiti not only was it improbable that any truly free election could be held (because of the ignorance and illiteracy of the majority of the electorate), but that legislative elections, if held without the exercise of undue influence by the Haitian Government and/or the Occupation, would almost certainly result in the election of a legislative body largely anti-American in sentiment. On September 3, 1921, Secretary Hughes had therefore informed Dartiguenave that the American Government would interpose no objection should he decide to





permit the election of his successor by the Council of State, which was authorized to do so in the absence of a legislature.<sup>1</sup>

After certain parliamentary maneuvers, the President announced his candidacy for re-election, and though General Russell reported that there were strong feelings against him, it was pretty generally assumed that the Council of State, wholly appointed by Dartiguenave, would return him for another term of office. Thus it came as something of a surprise, especially to the opposition, when not Dartiguenave, but Louis Borno was elected President on April 30, 1922. The successful candidate, who ran virtually unopposed, had apparently succeeded in bribing sufficient members of the Council behind the incumbent President's back.

The new President had a long if not distinguished career in the Haitian Government, had served three times as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and was the signer of both the Treaty of 1915 and the protocol extending its life for an additional ten years. Most importantly, he was considered strongly pro-American.

Immediately upon entering office, President Borno had enacted the long-deferred legislation necessary to put the Haitian Claims Commission into operation. After com-

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to Bailly-Blanchard, Despatch, Sept. 3, 1921, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 8.



petitive bids, a six percent loan of \$16 million was awarded to the National City Bank at a rate of 92.137. Of the funds thus realized, more than \$4 million went to the National Bank of Haiti (re-chartered in 1921 as a Haitian corporation wholly owned by the National City Bank) and more than \$2 million was paid to the National Railroad in liquidation of their large claims. The three French loans were repaid at the cost of something over \$6 million, taking advantage of the depressed state of the French franc. Remaining funds were applied to public works and amortization. An additional issue of \$5 million in bonds was floated by the National City Bank on the same terms as the \$16 million loan. These funds were used to repay the unpaid balance on previous internal loans and additional awards of the Claims Commission. More than 73,000 claims totaling just under \$30 million were considered, and settlement was made at a rate of about 12 percent. Thus, Haitian finances were at last put in reasonable order, and at reasonable expense to the Haitian State.

These financial negotiations, however, occasioned bitter attacks in the opposition press, which leveled wildly irresponsible charges against the Borno Government and the American treaty officials. In August, 1922 Russell issued a proclamation reminding the Haitian people of the nature of United States treaty obligations and re-stating the still existing responsibility of the military authorities under martial law to punish those found guilty



of seditious or libelous acts. Particular attention was called to the penalties attached to violation of the press laws. Under his authority as Brigade Commander, Russell, on May 26, 1921, declared that "while the freedom of the press and of speech are practically unrestricted, articles or speeches that are of an incendiary nature or reflect adversely upon the United States Forces in Haiti, or tend to stir up an agitation against the United States officials who are aiding and supporting the Constitutional Government of Haiti, or articles or speeches attacking the President of Haiti or the Haitian Government are prohibited and offenders against this order will be brought to trial before a Military Tribunal."<sup>2</sup> The language here was of course quite similar to that used by Admiral Caperton years before.

Prior to the Occupation, Haitian newspapers were ordinarily held in check by fear of the existing government. Articles offensive to the government would result, under past regimes, in the persons responsible being imprisoned or shot. After the American intervention, however, such action was impossible. The protection afforded to the newspapers resulted, however, not in a free press, but in an unlicensed press which was characterized by the most irresponsible attacks on the Haitian Government, the treaty officials, and American forces in Haiti. These attacks

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Proclamation issued by Brigade Commander, Port-au-Prince, May 26, 1921, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 12.





were often of an offensive, personal nature, and redress through the Haitian courts could ordinarily not be expected, because in cases where American officials or the Haitian Government were involved the outcome of a trial by jury was a foregone conclusion.

Though General Russell's action in this instance was undoubtedly justified by the existing situation, it was recognized in Washington as a dangerous maneuver. When several Port-au-Prince editors were arrested for trial before the provost court, cries for help went out to the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society which found in the alleged suppression of a free press the ammunition it had been looking for. The greatest damage to the Occupation growing out of this incident was the alienation of William D. Taft, Jr., who was angered by the continued application of martial law long after the need for it, in his opinion, should have disappeared. After the death of President Harding, the Senator openly broke with the Administration over its Haitian policy. On January 13, 1924, he wrote a long letter to President Calvin Coolidge in which he related his grievances and recommended the sending to Haiti of a Presidential Commission to investigate and report what had occurred there in the two years since the visit of his Committee. No satisfactory response being made to this initiative, he introduced Senate Resolution 144, on February 7, 1924.



## Martial Law in Haiti.

Whereas martial or military law was proclaimed in the territory of the Republic of Haiti by the Commander of the American military forces landed there in 1915; and

Whereas such military law continues effective throughout the territory of a friendly Republic by the authority of the President of the United States; and

Whereas under such military law citizens of Haiti are liable to arrest by the armed forces of the United States and to trial before military tribunals of the United States nine years after military law was first proclaimed to the end that anarchy might be checked and civil order restored: Therefore, be it

Resolved, that continuance of such military or martial law, and the liability of Haitian citizens, throughout the Republic, to trial before military tribunals of the United States, is undemocratic, unrepublican, and contrary to American ideals and the policies of Warren G. Harding, late President of the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The phrase "undemocratic and unrepublican" caught on, and was cited countless times by delighted opponents of the Occupation. Martial law remained in effect in Haiti, but its application throughout the remainder of the Occupation was extremely rare.

General Russell proved to be a skilled diplomat and an innovative administrator in the office of High Commissioner. In his supervision of the various treaty departments and in his negotiations with the Haitian Government, the budget became his principal tool. Budgetary proposals

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<sup>3</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 13.





and special appropriation projects were submitted simultaneously to the High Commissioner and to the Financial Adviser. Where differences of opinion existed between the department head and either or both of the reviewing officials, these differences were hammered out in "executive session." General Russell, however, is never known to have authorized an expenditure not agreed to by the Financial Adviser, and his legal right to do so under the terms of the treaty was at least questionable. When agreement on the terms of money projects was reached, the respective treaty official took the matter up with his opposite in the Haitian Government. Disagreements at this stage were normally resolved by conference between the High Commissioner and the President. When they failed to agree the issue was sometimes referred to Washington, but this was rare.

By his aggressive leadership, General Russell succeeded in uniting the treaty officials as never before in a program which slowly but surely seemed to be achieving the aims of the 1915 treaty. The Haitian public debt was steadily reduced and a cash surplus was maintained in the public treasury for the first time in the country's history. By almost any other standards than Haitian, however, the country remained bitterly poor, even in the relatively good economic years between 1926 and 1929. And there was, inevitably, friction with the Haitian Government.

The core of the difficulty lay in the feeling on the



part of Americans that money allocated for expenditures under Haitian administration was by and large money wasted, a feeling not completely without justification. Consequently, there was a tendency, since Americans controlled the collection and disbursement of public funds, for American projects to expand at the expense of Haitian projects. Nowhere was this tendency more evident and nowhere did it stir up more acrimony than in the area of public instruction.

In April, 1923, a protocol was signed which provided for the establishment of a technical bureau under American administration within the Haitian Department of Agriculture. This bureau was called "Service Technique de l'Agriculture et de l'Enseignement Professionel," a title ordinarily shortened to "Service Technique." In February, 1924, the Council of State passed a law assigning to the Service Technique responsibility for improving Haiti's agriculture and for establishing a program of vocational education. In succeeding years increasingly larger appropriations were provided the Service Technique at the expense of correspondingly smaller sums voted for the Haitian administered Ministry of Public Education. As touched upon earlier, Haiti's educational system since the foundation of the Republic had been a disgrace. There were schools with no pupils, teachers who were illiterate, and, on the part of the educated élite, absolute disdain for the needs of the children of the peasant class. Consequently, there



had never been any attempt to provide vocational schools even though countless critics had cited the crying need in Haiti for a skilled, working middle class. What public education there was under Haitian administration, was education for children of the élite, and the schools nominally provided in rural areas were little more than sources of petty graft for their administrators. Schools for the city élite concentrated on the liberal arts and preparation for the professions, particularly law. Port-au-Prince during the American occupation probably had a greater proportion of lawyers for its population than any other city in the world. Manual labor was looked down on, and no self-respecting citizen would be caught dead carrying so much as a package in the street. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say, as Occupation officials frequently did, that there were in Haiti few men who could saw a board straight or push a wheelbarrow correctly until shown how to do so by the Americans.

How deliberate the élite policy of keeping the Haitian peasant in ignorance was, is of course debatable. That it was deliberate, however, had been suggested by some Haitians for years.

Ah, if he could speak, our peasant! He would say very sensibly, "I want light, I want progress, I want happiness. I am tired of my African superstitions from which you have done nothing to free me....Do not pen me up in the isolation of ignorance and distress which have made of me a veritable serf. I am the true force, the real force which





can save all. Have the loyalty, while it is yet time, to permit light, progress, and civilization to come to me." 4

Another source of friction between American officials and the Haitian élite was the judicial system of Haiti. The courts of Haiti at this time were of four classes. At the lowest level were the Tribunaux de Paix, or police courts. These were about 125 in number, notoriously venal, corrupt, and inefficient. A favorite story of the Occupation concerned the case of a man who had been arrested for stealing the door off a house. Even though he was apprehended with the door in his possession, he was acquitted by the Juge de Paix, who by chance happened to be the man's cousin. Above the Tribunaux de Paix were 11 Courts of First Instance, and over them 2 Courts of appeal. The Haitian equivalent of the United States Supreme Court was called the Cour de Cassation. The common complaint of American treaty officials was that it was absolutely impossible for an American or an American administered department of the Haitian Government to get impartial treatment in a Haitian court. The judicial system was blamed for discouraging the investment of capital in Haiti. The courts were condemned for awarding excessive and unwarranted judgements in suits against the govern-

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4. Frederic Marcelin, "Une Evolution Nécessaire," a pamphlet emprinted in Paris, 1898.



ment, judgements which the Financial Adviser often refused to pay. This, while it doubtless saved the Haitian Government funds, did not do very much to improve respect for law.

President Borno followed the lead of his predecessor and failed to name the date for legislative elections in 1924 and 1926. In the latter year, again with the blessing of the American State Department, he was elected to a second four-year term. As opposed to his first election, when a scuffle broke out and the voting urn was turned over and destroyed, the balloting in 1926 was uneventful. His re-election by the Council of State did occasion renewed attacks by the opposition, which will be discussed later.

In 1927 General Russell determined that for the ultimate success of the Occupation, certain revisions in the Haitian Constitution were necessary. It was considered too risky to have the revisions considered by a specially elected National Assembly, such as provided for in the constitution, for this would only result, it was thought, in the bringing together of active obstructionists. Therefore, it was decided to employ the procedure followed in 1918. The Council of State would consider the amendments and then they would be presented to the people in a referendum.

The changes desired by the High Commissioner concerned, naturally, the Haitian judiciary. It was proposed to suspend, for a period of one year, the irremovability of judges.





This, combined with the President's appointive power, would permit replacement of those judges who were considered antagonistic to the government. The terms of judges were reduced from life appointments to seven years, except for the Cour de Cassation, where a ten year term was specified with life tenure after a judge had served there for twenty-five years. The Cour de Cassation would also function as a Court of Appeal, and thus provide the government with an avenue of redress from unfavorable action in the lower courts.

President Borno and the Council of State suggested certain amendments of their own. The Gendarmerie would be renamed the Garde, a more descriptive title in view of its expanded functions. Trial by jury would no longer be guaranteed to violators of the press laws. The terms of office for senators would be changed from six to four years, and the President from four to seven years. The legislative bodies (including the Council of State in the absence of a legislature) would have the exclusive power to interpret the Constitution.

The last two recommendations were strongly opposed by the American State Department. After considerable discussion it was agreed that interpretation of the Constitution, and the laws, would be a function of the Cour de Cassation, following the American model, and that the presidential term of office would be fixed at six years, with no eligibility for re-election. It was understood, however, that



the incumbent President Borno would be eligible for re-election to a final term of six years in 1930. This was extremely important, for the man thus elected would hold office in the crucial final years of the American Occupation, due to expire under the terms of the treaty in 1936. This point was not missed by the opposition.

On January 10, 1928, the proposed amendments to the Haitian Constitution were adopted in public referendum by a vote of 177,436 to 3,799. The referendum was understandably jeered by those who wished to know why, if the people were capable of voting on amendments they were unable to read, they were not considered capable of electing representatives to the national legislature.

As the decade of the twenties drew to a close, the forces supporting the American Occupation had shrunk to a skeleton Brigade of Marines numbering scarcely 500 men. Another 100 Marines served in the Garde d'Haiti. The treaty organization under the High Commissioner consisted of five departments: the Garde, the Financial Adviser-General Receiver, Public Works, Public Health Service, and the Technical Service of Agriculture. Americans employed in the various departments numbered about 250.

The Haitian public debt, the structure of which had been a prime factor in the intervention of 1915, had been reduced by half and the balance re-financed on favorable terms. Foreign claims had been settled. Steps had been taken to disentangle Haiti from its disastrous railroad



concessions. In all of these complicated financial arrangements, no breath of scandal had attached itself to American officials, to the deep chagrin of those who searched carefully but in vain for a Haitian "Teapot Dome" or a new "Consolidation Affair." Economic progress was slow, painfully slow, for with the exception of salaries paid to naval and marine personnel serving in Haiti, the United States shared in no costs of the Occupation and gave no financial aid. Visible improvements occurred in sanitation, roads, hospitals, prisons, water systems, and schools. The annual reports of the High Commissioner were filled with statistics and photographs documenting material progress, and to those who were privileged to know Haiti both before and after the intervention, the transformation was said to be remarkable.

The prolonged failure to institute representative government in Haiti was painfully evident to all, however. It was clear that the Haitian people in 1929, almost a whole generation after the intervention, were no more prepared to govern themselves than they had been on that day in 1915 when Admiral Caperton arrived to see them parading the body of their President through the streets. The streets, to be sure, were clean in 1929, but the people had not changed.





### Part Three

#### Retreat

"The true philosophy of history consists of the insight that, throughout the jumble of all these ceaseless changes, we have ever before our eyes the same unchanging being, pursuing the same course today, yesterday, and forever."

- Schopenhauer.



## VII. The Occupation Under Attack.

The United States invaded the Republics of Haiti and Santo Domingo and is holding them in subjugation through martial law for no other reason than to allow American corporations to grab the rich resources of the two republics and to exploit them, according to Senator Borah of Idaho. The Senator spoke last night at a mass meeting in Carnegie Hall called by the Hayti-Santo Domingo Independence Society in protest against the continued occupation of the island republics by the United States....

The auditorium was crowded from stage to topmost balcony and Senator Borah was applauded and cheered....

"There is no politics in this," announced Senator Borah. "The Democrats went in and the Republicans are staying in.... If I had thought that this occupation was only a temporary affair I would not be here to talk to you tonight. I am firmly convinced that we are there to stay for all time unless public opinion rises to a pitch to change conditions....

"Not only are we concerned with the welfare of the natives of these republics, but we are concerned with the honor and integrity of our country and of our people."

- The New York World, May 2, 1922.

In April, 1922, the Foreign Policy Association of New York published a pamphlet entitled "The Seizure of Haiti by the United States," which was endorsed and distributed by the National Popular Government League of Washington, D.C. The pamphlet was signed by 24 distinguished lawyers, including Felix Frankfurter, a future Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. In the pamphlet it was argued that the continued presence of American military forces in Haiti was a violation of well-recognized American principles, and that the actions of those military forces were not only contrary to international law, but to the United States





constitution. The pamphlet concluded with a call for the immediate abrogation of the treaty of 1915, the holding of free Haitian elections, and the negotiation of a new treaty upon such terms as shall be mutually satisfactory to both countries and by the methods that obtain between free and independent states."<sup>1</sup>

The legal brief was a strong one, and the qualifications of those endorsing it impeccable. The intervention was defended, however, by a respected scholar, Dr. Carl Kelsey, in a paper presented to the American Academy of Political Science in 1922, entitled "The American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic." In effect, Dr. Kelsey told critics to "check their premises."

There never has been any election in Haiti. There never has been any democracy in Haiti. It is a perfectly foolish use of language to talk as if there had been. Haiti traded a slave system under white slaveowners for a slave system under mulatto owners, and they have run under a slave regime from the first up to the present time....

A century ago men, sensing an idea a little beyond their powers of expression, spoke glowingly of "individual rights" as if they arose and existed apart from society. We know today that rights flow from society and are determined by it. To society the individual is responsible and when the commands of society are violated, the individual is punished; that is, his rights are limited. Society judges the individual by his actions and not by his size. It recognizes that individuals differ and that the rights granted must be proportionate to the sense of responsibility developed by the individual. The insane man must have a guardian. When we deal with

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<sup>1</sup>Foreign Policy Association, "The Seizure of Haiti by the United States," Pamphlet No. 8, New York, 1922.



defective persons we do so not to punish them but to assist them and to protect others, that is, society....

The individual is most affected by the actions of his neighbors. If a man on the adjoining place begins to shoot indiscriminately with a high-powered rifle I am immediately involved regardless of whether he intends to do me harm or not. In an organized society I invoke the law. Under frontier conditions I handle the problem myself. In the present state of world organization we must follow the program of the frontier.<sup>2</sup>

The philosophical battle was joined. The "24 lawyers" relied on the letter of the law and testimony in the published transcript of the Senate Select Committee to show that the United States had broken the law. Dr. Kelsey provided much-needed support for the State Department in its attempt to justify admittedly "illegal" actions in Haiti on the grounds that it was dealing with not the constituted Government of Haiti, nor with the representatives of the Haitian people, but rather with irresponsible political leaders who had come into prominence as the leaders of armed uprisings. In all such battles, however, the advantage lies with the side which has the initiative, and the initiative never left the opponents of the Occupation.

On April 29, 1922, General Russell informed the Secretary of State that Dr. Gruening in behalf of the Haitian Santo Domingo Independence Society had asked the Union Patriotique to raise the sum of \$12,000 gold as its share

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Kelsey, "The American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," American Academy of Political Science, Philadelphia, 1922.





of the expenses associated with the holding of a mass meeting in New York, jointly sponsored with the Foreign Policy Association, to protest the election (by the Council of State) recently held in Haiti. Dr. Gruening promised that Senator William E. Borah would be one of the speakers. Subscriptions were in fact taken in Port-au-Prince, and the High Commissioner was told that outgoing President Dartiguenave had contributed \$50 and his Cabinet \$250! Press reports of Senator Borah's speech in Carnegie Hall were widely circulated in Haiti.

Certain members of the National Civic Federation were in the audience to hear Senator Borah's May Day speech and Louis Marshall's declaration that Germany did nothing in Belgium to equal the atrocities committed by the Americans in Haiti and Santo Domingo. Mr. Ralph Easley, the Chairman of the Federation's Executive Council, which included such well known figures as Marshall Field and Samuel Gompers, wrote immediately to Secretary of State Hughes for material on which to base a reply to the charges which had been made. "It goes without saying," he said, "that a policy originated by the late Administration, continued and defended by the present one and sustained in a report made by a commission of democratic and republican leaders cannot be open to any such vicious charges as are made by this Foreign Policy Association and its radical adjunct, the National Popular Government League. In fact, the public would generally assume that such a policy must





be fairly just."<sup>3</sup>

In the same mail with Mr. Easley's letter was another of a completely different character from an old friend of Mr. Hughes, Louis Marshall, who complained of the treatment afforded the "24 lawyers" at a meeting with the Secretary at the State Department.

... I was therefore not only astounded, but stunned, when you began your remarks with the announcement that you regarded the statement that had been made ["The Seizure of Haiti by the United States"] as most inadequate and one-sided, and closed with the paragraph: "You need not for a moment suppose that any of these matters are not engaging the attention of the Department; we have very full information, in the light of which I am bound to say that the statements you have made here are extremely inadequate."

I had always fancied that the right of petition existed; that it was the privilege of a citizen to present facts, as he understood them, in an orderly and respectful manner; that he was not to be subjected to public contumely because of that fact, nor that an oral pronouncement such as yours was, would be followed by the publication of the full text in the newspapers....

It is quite certain that those who believe in the doctrine of manifest destiny will contend that our Government has a moral right to dominate over inferior nations, that those who desire an opportunity to exploit the rich lands of Haiti and to attend to her finances, will agree that we have done no wrong. That may be the other side of the question. But I mistake the American people if they will ever accept such doctrines...<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Marshall may or may not have been prepared for the

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<sup>3</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, National Civic Federation to Secretary of State, May 2, 1922, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Louis Marshall to Charles Evans Hughes, May 2, 1922, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 9.



reply fired back by the Secretary. The rebuttal of Mr. Marshall's supposed grievances was devastating in tone, and the principles expressed might well be considered by any person holding high public office.

... I said that the statements which you and others made to me with respect to the relations of the United States and Haiti were inadequate and one-sided. I described these statements in this way, first, because I thought this was a just description, and, second, because the circumstances made it necessary that they should be thus described.

Of course you have the right of petition. I recognized it in receiving you, and certainly you fully exercised it. But this does not mean that a public officer is to be deprived of the right to put in a caveat against the assumption on the part of the public that statements submitted should be accepted. If you bombard a public officer in this way, he is at least entitled to avoid the misinterpretation which might easily be placed upon his silence.

I confess that I am amused at the humor, apparently unconscious, of your complaint that my remarks were made public. Your brief, which I had already read, and the striking extracts from the oral statements made, had already been given to the press, as I knew at the time, subject to release after the interview. In short, you staged a public demonstration in order to insure publicity for your assertions and demands, and surely you have no right to object to my publishing my rejoinder that I thought your statements inadequate and one-sided....

I recognize your rights, although I do not commend your attitude. If you were really desirous of aiding the Administration in its handling of a difficult and highly important situation, you would have come to me - and our old friendship would seem to have suggested that course - in order to secure such information as could properly be given to you. You might have learned that the Administration had been devoting itself with the utmost earnestness and solicitude to this problem. Instead you saw fit, exercising your undoubted right, to present your peremptory demands.

I shall continue to deal with this matter and to advise the President according to my best judgement, as fully conscious of the demands of justice and of the Nation's honor as you yourself can possibly be.





We shall, of course, seek in every possible way to conserve the welfare and the independence of the people of Haiti and to end the military occupation as soon as can properly be done. We shall make such public statements from time to time as, in this position of grave responsibility, may be deemed compatible with the public interest.<sup>5</sup>

That letter quieted Louis Marshall and the 24 lawyers for a time, but the pot was definitely boiling from fires set on a dozen sides. In 1922, Senator William H. King, recently a member of the Senate Select Committee, introduced an amendment to the military appropriations bill providing that no funds could be used for the maintenance of Marines in Haiti or the Dominican Republic. The amendment was defeated, but Senators King and Borah took the occasion for a ringing denunciation of American policy in those two countries. On April 26, 1922, the Joint Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America delivered a memorandum to the President in protest of American policy in Haiti. This was but one of many church groups which took a stand on the issue.

Protest in the United States encouraged more open action in Haiti, and the Gendarmerie had its hands full in keeping the situation under control. "Macandalism" entered the vocabulary of the opposition in Port-au-Prince. It referred to a black man named Macandal who in the time of the revolution

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. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Charles Evans Hughes to Louis Marshall, May 5, 1922, Microcopy 610, Vol. 9.



against the French, being skilled in the use of herbs and poisons, had succeeded in killing many whites by subverting their servants. Thinly veiled threats appeared in the opposition press, and some, such as the following, were open invitations to murder. "Louis" refers, of course, to the President of the Republic, Louis Borno.

... Louis the Pious is crazy. Even his most intimate friends can no longer hide the fact. We must add that he is not just crazed - he is furiously and dangerously insane. Modern medicine administers poison to those furiously and dangerously insane....Has not the moment arrived to feed a sausage to Louis?6

Dozens of examples could be drawn from the opposition newspapers in Port-au-Prince in this period which encouraged violence against the Americans and Government officials, and yet the Occupation was virtually helpless to suppress such scurrilous activity, not only because of the already mentioned disinclination of the Haitian courts to convict, but because of the anticipated reaction in the United States to any "tampering" with Haiti's "free" press.

In October, 1924, a campaign was launched in the French press criticizing the American occupation of Haiti. The occasion for this was an address by a member of the Union Patriotique, Dantes Bellegarde, before the International Union of Associations in favor of the League of Nations in

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6. Courrier Haitien, Port-au-Prince, June 12, 1924.



Lyons. The address used the principle of self-determination for small peoples as a point of departure. When Mr. Bellegarde returned from France he bore a mandate from the "Ligue des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen" to form a local branch of that association in Port-au-Prince. In March, 1925, the French Prime Minister was petitioned by the parent organization to bring up the question of the military occupation of Haiti by the United States before the next session of the Council of the League of Nations.

The "Universal Negro Improvement Association," according to Port-au-Prince newspapers, asked in a resolution unanimously voted by "the negroes of five continents" that the last Sunday in October, 1924, be celebrated as "Haiti Independence Day." Widespread support for Haitian independence flared in the Latin American press, and rumors of imminent American withdrawal circulated in Haiti. At the town of Gonaives, a General of the old Haitian Army rode into town to take charge as "Commandant of Arrondissement." He had heard out in the hills that the Americans were leaving, and he was dressed in his old uniform.

In the United States, Marcus Garvey of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, whose "Negro World" was a scheme for a new colored nation in Africa, joined forces with James Weldon Johnson, Dr. Greuning, Oscar Garrison Villard, and other charter members of the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society in an attempt to use planned disruptions in Haiti as an embarrassment to the Coolidge





Administration during the American national elections in 1924. Instructions were sent to the Union Patriotique to commence an active propaganda throughout Haiti, and to print in the opposition press abusive and defamatory articles against the President and the Occupation, with a view to securing arrests for violation of the press laws. These arrests would then be used as political material in the American presidential campaign.<sup>7</sup> These instructions fell into the hands of the High Commissioner, and arrests were not made, though the abuses were many.

In May, 1925, Senator King called at the State Department with a prominent representative of the Union Patriotique, Pierre Hudicourt, and expressed himself at great length concerning his views on Haiti, stating that if he were President the Marines would be withdrawn the next day, and that if the Haitians desire bloodshed and revolution, that was their privilege, as much as he condemned such practices himself. He went on to say that American policy in Haiti would bring about a revolution here, and when it happened it would have his full support. Mr. Hudicourt listened to this with undisguised satisfaction.<sup>8</sup> Senator King thus stole a march on Senator Borah,

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. U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Russell to Secretary of State, No. 435, October 30, 1924, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 14.

. Ibid., Internal Memorandum of Division of Latin American Affairs, May 22, 1925, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 16.



and became the American patron saint of the Union Patriotique. A photograph of the Senator, seated in the midst of a half dozen leaders of the Haitian opposition, was later sold in the streets of Port-au-Prince to raise funds to fight the Occupation. In March, 1927, the Senator announced that he would visit Haiti, and this caused President Borno to issue instructions to the Gendarmerie to prevent his entrance into the Republic. The President characterized Senator King as an agitator who had identified himself with the very worst Haitian elements, and he stated that the proposed visit could only produce results detrimental to the interests of Haiti and the United States. The High Commissioner silently agreed, and Senator King had to content himself with grumblings from across the border in the Dominican Republic. The opposition press, however, headlined a letter from the Senator to the Union Patriotique on March 31, 1927, which was extremely critical of the President of Haiti, the American State Department, and the High Commissioner.

In the summer and fall of 1925 there was considerable agitation both in Haiti and in the United States concerning the subject of Haitian elections, 1926 being an "even numbered year" and also the year which marked the end of President Borno's first term of office. Not even Mrs. Coolidge was spared an influx of mail urging that Haitian elections be held. In Port-au-Prince one Dr. Tribie, a leading spirit of the Union Patriotique, announced his





candidacy and a platform calling for "fifteen thousand primary schools; one thousand forts in the mountains and trenches provided with high caliber and long range cannons; an aerial and naval fleet; purchase of the contract of the Banque Nationale de la Republique d'Haiti, in order to be delivered from the control of the National City Bank of New York; negotiation of a loan of four or five billion sold on the Belgian market; diminution of expenses and increase in salaries."<sup>9</sup> The High Commissioner commented that it would be difficult to find a platform which would more appeal to ignorance and prejudice. As already noted, however, President Borno did not name a date for legislative elections and he was himself re-elected to a second term by the Council of State. In the wake of his announcement that there would be no legislative elections in 1926, the president's popularity dipped to a new low. On January 3, 1926, he presided at the disinterment and reburial together of the remains of Dessalines and Pétion. There was no applause following his speech, and the claque's shouts of "Vive Borno!" were actually met by laughter.

On February 19, 1926, a committee sponsored by the "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom" (W.I.L.P.F.) sailed for Haiti to "look into conditions there." The committee was nominally headed by Miss Emily Greene Balch, a well

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<sup>9</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Russell to Secretary of State, No. 614, August 27, 1925, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 17.



known sociologist, and it consisted of two representatives of the American branch of the W.I.L.P.F., two representative colored women, a representative of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and an economics professor at Amherst College representing the Foreign Service Committee of the Society of Friends. This last was Mr. Paul H. Douglas, the only male in the group, and later a decorated combat marine and distinguished United States Senator.

On their arrival in Port-au-Prince, February 24, they were warmly welcomed by the Union Patriotique. They called on the High Commissioner and informed him that their mission was purely philanthropic and had no political significance. General Russell, however, sized them up as "internationalists and pacifists," and later reported that while in Haiti they showed little interest in present constructive achievements, but were eager to uncover past mistakes. The High Commissioner informed them that the Occupation's work in Haiti was an open book, that he had nothing to conceal, but was on the contrary exceedingly proud of what had been accomplished in assisting a backward nation; that if they came with open minds they too would be proud as Americans, but that if they came with fixed principles and preconceived ideas, they might as well return home at once.<sup>10</sup>

Though friendly assurances were given during the call

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<sup>10</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Russell to Secretary of State, No. 735, March 13, 1926, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 19.





on General Russell, Miss Balch soon thereafter angered him when she literally flew into the arms of Jane Adams, who made an overnight stop in Port-au-Prince on the cruise ship Mount Royal, with a wholly unsubstantiated story that the American High Commissioner had prevented her party from registering at Haiti's Hotel Montaigne because of the committee's colored members. Jane Adams, of Hull House fame, was also the international president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. General Russell summoned Miss Balch and Mr. Douglas to the American Legation and extracted an apology for their error, but apparently got no retraction.

While in Port-au-Prince the committee called on foreign representatives in Haiti to secure their views on the American Occupation, and at no time seemed to take special pains to conceal their own attitude on the subject. Prior to returning to the United States they called a second time on the High Commissioner and urged him to use his influence in ending harassment of the press, and in securing free and open elections.

In the United States the committee collaborated on a report, edited by Miss Balch, entitled "Occupied Haiti; being the report of a committee of six disinterested Americans representing organizations exclusively American, who, having personally studied conditions in Haiti in 1926, favor the restoration of the negro republic." The report urged that an official commission be sent to Haiti to begin the





work necessary for a transition to Haitian control of the government, and the eventual withdrawal of the Occupation. In the whole, "Occupied Haiti" presented the most balanced and rational attack on the American Occupation of any produced in this period. It found that from the point of view of selfish American interests, there was little to justify continuance of the Occupation. American investments in Haiti were unprofitable. The American military presence here was damaging to American relations with Latin America. Military control of civilian affairs was the worst possible model for Haiti. The by then standard criticisms were leveled - Marine rowdiness and drinking, the drawing of the color line, "brutal contempt" for elections, and interference with the freedom of the press. The committee's major recommendations, however - withdrawal by 1936, a commission to investigate and report, legislative elections, demilitarization of the American administration while it lasted, "Haitianization," gradual withdrawal of Marines - were those eventually put in practice by the American government. It was only when the report lapsed into the Britanical that it seemed a trifle ridiculous.

Disquieting rumors are abroad of pressure in favor of establishing gambling places as an attraction to tourists. We emphatically protest against such a plan.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Emily Greene Balch, ed., Occupied Haiti, (New York, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1927), p. 154.



Working drafts of "Occupied Haiti" and a separate article prepared by Paul Douglas for publication in Foreign Notes were sent to the American State Department for comment and possible correction. None was provided.

On May 13, 1927, the enlisted strength of the Marine Brigade in Haiti was reduced to 452, when a battalion of Marines was withdrawn for service in Nicaragua. General Russell requested their return or replacement at the earliest practicable date in view of possible disturbances when the planned constitutional changes were announced in the fall. Brigade strength was left at about the 500 mark, however.

No elections were held in 1928, but the High Commissioner reported that President Borno finally and definitely agreed to the holding of legislative elections in January, 1930. By that time, it was estimated, all important laws could have been drafted and voted upon (by the Council of State) and the entire governmental machinery, with the exception of the legislature, would be in full operation. Upon receipt of this optimistic report, Secretary of State Kellogg wired President Borno his personal congratulations on the electoral decision.

A crucial year lay ahead, however, and it was a year that would prove decisive for the American Occupation.





XVIII. The Disorders of 1929.

If you hear the politicians groan, it is because they are expiating their lack of humanity, presumption and bad faith. They never loved you, they never wished the best for you. They who forged all your miseries, all your troubles, now mention you out of the purest hypocrisy in their desperate appeals to the misguided philanthropy of the Kings and Borahs. All the philanthropists of the world could not save a nation in disorder, whose children close their ears to every word of reason....

In this country it is almost impossible to do good. Our most distinguished men, for the most part, have apparently sworn to spend their lives lying, deceiving and leading into error the thousands of illiterates purposely kept in that degrading condition for a century....

Let the whites withdraw tomorrow and the day after tomorrow the country will be put to fire and sword. In spite of the lesson of fully fourteen years, are we able to put our hands on fifty Haitian Statesmen?

- L'Essor, editorial, Port-au-Prince, April 5, 1929.

President Borno's "decision" to hold legislative elections in 1930 was not publicized and was known only to himself, the High Commissioner, and the State Department. In the spring of 1929 he began to have second thoughts on the matter, stating that he had not adequately realized the "tremendous upheaval" which would undoubtedly be caused by legislative and presidential elections in the same year. These sentiments were shared by General Russell and certain officials in the State Department. The Haitian Administration elected in 1930 would be the administration in office when negotiations for a possible renewal of the Haitian-American treaty, due to expire in 1936, were held.



In March, 1929, the Head of the Latin American Affairs Division, Mr. Dana G. Munro, informed the Under Secretary of State, Francis White, that any election held would be a farce in existing circumstances in Haiti, and that "any congress which might be elected, even though the Borno administration dominated its selection, would inevitably be a serious obstacle to further progress."<sup>1</sup> Mr. White agreed, and so advised the new Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, who stated that the calling of legislative elections was a Haitian responsibility.

The opposition was thus left in the dark about the President's intentions (he had until October 10, 1929, to announce the date for the election if he decided to hold one), but they suspected the worst. Agitation continued in the press.

On April 22, 1929, three opposition journalists were tried and convicted for violation of the press law, specifically for denouncing President Borno as a traitor and attacking the Archbishop of Haiti for racial prejudice and pro-American sentiments. In the poisonous atmosphere of Port-au-Prince, extraordinary precautions were taken at the time to prevent the outbreak of violence. One American officer, one Haitian officer and a detective were placed in charge of the prisoners with additional instructions to

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U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Internal Department Memorandum, March 16, 1929, Micro Copy 1, Vol. 26.



remain in the immediate vicinity of the Judge for his protection. Ten Gardes, unarmed except for police clubs, and ten plain-clothes men were stationed in the courtroom. The Gardes were placed at all exits and entrances, and the plain-clothes men were distributed throughout the audience. Three American officers, two non-commissioned officers and sixteen privates, all members of the Garde, were posted in the street in front of the building. One American officer was at the front entrance, one at the rear, and a third circulated on a motorcycle. The officers and non-commissioned officers carried revolvers, and the men carried police clubs.

Underneath the building, and not in view, one non-commissioned officer and ten privates armed only with police clubs, were held ready for any emergency. The Fire Department had a steamer in reserve at the Garde Garage, 200 yards distant, under the command of an American officer. This precaution was taken with the idea of dispersing a crowd with a stream of water if necessary, and to obviate the use of any other force.

Four American officers were stationed in the hallway outside the courtroom.

At the Police Station, 400 yards distant, a detachment of five non-commissioned officers and fifteen privates, armed respectively with revolvers and rifles, were held in reserve under the command of an American officer. The Twelfth Mobile Company of the Garde was held in reserve at





the Caserne.

The Commandant of the Garde stated that "of this entire force only twelve uniformed members of the Garde were actually in the courtroom. Twenty-one were in view outside of the building, but all others were held in reserve and out of sight. This was done so that the charge of intimidation could not be entertained."<sup>2</sup>

The journalists on trial were Jacques Roumain, George F. Petit, and Elie Guerin. The defense attorney gave a ringing speech in which, to the cheers of the spectators, he denounced President Borno as "an ass with three heads." At the conclusion of his speech, the prisoners embraced their lawyer by leaning over the prisoner's box, and one, Roumain, made as if to step over the box. He was restrained by an American officer, and in the struggle the box broke under their weight and they both fell to the ground.

At this point the courtroom was in extreme disorder. Part of the audience surged toward the platform. People were shouting at a high pitch of emotion. The Commissaire du Gouvernement fled from the room. The Presiding Judge sought refuge under his desk, and later disappeared, returning when quiet had been restored. Three women in the middle of the room were shrieking at the top of their voices.

The American officer who had fallen, struggled to his

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<sup>2</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Memorandum for the High Commissioner from Commandant, Garde d'Haiti, May 1, 1929, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 26.



feet, only to be rushed by Roumain, who attempted to throttle him. The Haitian Chief of Detectives finally subdued the irate journalist by striking him twice on the head with a night stick, resulting in bloody scalp wounds. American officers carried Roumain to the side of the judge's desk and wrapped his head with their handkerchiefs. An angry crowd closed in on the Chief of Detectives, but he quieted them by drawing his revolver. All three prisoners were then led out of the courtroom to a police camion.

The version of this affair circulated in the opposition press stated that Roumain had no intention of starting demonstration, and that his sole idea in trying to leave the box was to kiss his sister farewell.

On October 5, 1929, President Borno announced that there would be no elections for the legislature in 1930 and that consequently the Council of State would elect the next President. A storm of protest was raised both in Haiti and the United States. A "National League for Constitutional Action" was formed in Port-au-Prince, and in Washington "The People's Lobby" ("To Fight for the People We Get and Give the Facts") demanded that the Secretary of State take action. The State Department steadfastly maintained, however, that it was a "Haitian decision" whether elections were to be held or not.

It is possible that this storm also might have blown over, had it not been for a "strike" of students at the





Service Technique's Central School of Agriculture, at  
Damien, on October 31, 1929. The facts concerning the  
disturbances there are as follows.

It had been traditional in Haiti to provide promising students at the secondary level with a "bourse" or scholarship in order to encourage them to continue their studies. The vast majority of these scholarships were paid to the children of the urban élite, who enjoyed a vastly superior primary education in addition to other obvious advantages over the country children. In 1929, however, it was decided to reduce the \$10,000 appropriation for bourse money by 20 percent, and to use the \$2,000 saved to pay wages to country students working on Service Technique demonstration farms and experimental stations. The new program was quite naturally welcomed by the country students, but it enraged the city students who, trained from childhood to regard manual labor as degrading, saw part of their class privilege eroded. The strike at Damien spread into other schools, including those at the primary level. At Cape Haitian it was reported that the children no longer saluted the national flag at morning ceremonies, and that they were openly disrespectful to their teachers. At Jacmel, in a school children's parade, the only colors carried was a flag of red with a green serpent. When the national air was started by the school band, student leaders put a stop to it.

Opposition politicians fanned the movement and slowly



converted it into a general protest against the Borno Administration and the American Occupation. On December 4, 1929, the Customs House employees at Port-au-Prince became insolent and attacked their American supervisor, throwing typewriters and inkwells on the floor. A mob forced its way into the office of the Financial Adviser, demanding higher wages. In these circumstances General Russell felt compelled to issue the following proclamation on the afternoon of December 4.

The United States Forces in Haiti are engaged in aiding and supporting the constitutional government of Haiti and are your friends. By their efforts and those of the Garde d'Haiti, peace and tranquility have been established throughout your land for many years, permitting you to conduct your business and earn an honest living.

Certain agitators are now endeavoring to foment trouble. It therefore becomes necessary to again place in towns the power and authority of martial law, which has during the past few years been inoperative.

You are also informed that articles or speeches of an incendiary nature or those that reflect adversely upon the United States forces in Haiti or tend to stir up agitation against the United States officials who are aiding and supporting the constitutional government of Haiti, are prohibited and offenders against this order will be brought to trial before a military tribunal.

From the promulgation of this proclamation, all inhabitants of the cities of Port-au-Prince and Cape Haitian will remain in their houses from 9 o'clock P.M. until daylight.<sup>3</sup>

General Russell followed up this proclamation with the

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<sup>3</sup> U. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Proclamation of the First Provisional Brigade of Marines Haiti, Dec. 4, 1929, Micro Copy 610, Vol. 27.





urgent request for an increase in the strength of the Marine Brigade by 500, until after the inauguration of the new president in 1930. This news was received with the greatest dismay in Washington, and Secretary of State Stimson sent Russell a Rush, Double Priority wire requesting that he withhold his proclamation pending receipt of the Secretary's full views on the matter. By then, however, it was too late, even if circumstances would have permitted less drastic action by the High Commissioner.

Stimson's long personal message to General Russell arrived a few hours after the proclamation of renewed martial law and curfew. The Secretary stated that the Navy Department had been instructed to place the USS Galveston and its marine detachment, then at Guantanamo, at Russell's disposal, but that he hoped it would not be necessary to land additional forces.

Having said that you will be supported in your final responsibility of protecting life, I nevertheless think it proper to say that from this distance it does not seem that the situation requires or will be best served by a display of marine forces in the outlying portions of the island. It seems to me that the nub of your situation rests in the question of the loyalty of the native constabulary and I hope you will be careful not to discourage that loyalty by an appearance of distrust or of supplanting it with white forces. Under white officers such as you have the general loyalty of black troops is usually proven against even local dissatisfaction or mutiny. In whatever manner you ultimately decide upon I trust you will give the loyalty of your constabulary a thorough and fair test. Even if you deem it necessary to use more actively than hitherto the present force of marines, I seriously question the wisdom of the proclamation yesterday as to martial law. To me it seems that





the benefit of such a proclamation in an illiterate population like Haiti is outweighed by the unfortunate effect produced in the United States, particularly as you state that martial law was already in force. I therefore sincerely hope that you may soon be able to greatly modify or withdraw that proclamation. In so doing I suggest that you make it clear that the present issue is not between the people of Haiti and the forces of the United States but between agitators against the lawfully constituted authority of Haiti supported by the United States.

In summary I sincerely hope that you may find it possible to protect life by withdrawal of Americans in exposed places rather than by extending the use of the present marine forces or calling for additional marines. The responsibility is, however, upon you and will be respected.<sup>4</sup>

Russell's attempt to meet Secretary Stimson's desires in the crisis seemed to be overtaken by events, for the next day a skirmish between a Haitian mob and a marine patrol at Aux Cayes left 6 dead and 28 wounded, all Haitian. Four of the wounded later died. In these circumstances, the 500 marines Russell had requested were immediately dispatched from the United States.

The situation at Aux Cayes had begun building in late December when opposition emissaries from Port-au-Prince arrived to organize a school children's strike. Stevedores were persuaded to join in the disturbances, and a small detachment of marines arrived to quiet things down. Agitation increased, however, and spread to the peasants in the surrounding countryside, who were already restless due to a

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U. S. S., National Archives, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Haiti, 1910-1929, Secretary of State to Russell, despatch, Dec. 5, 1929, Copy 610, Vol. 27.



recent drastic fall in the price they received for their coffee crop (caused by world market conditions). A mob of about 1500 gathered on the outskirts of the town and advanced on the center. It was met by a patrol of 20 marines armed with rifles and one machine gun. Leaders of the mob requested and were given permission to enter the town to confer with opposition politicians there. They then returned to demand the release of three prisoners from the Gendarme jail. This was refused, and the marines began to be pelted by rocks. In what may have been the first American use of air power for psychological effect, an old marine scout plane flew over the mob and dropped several small bombs in the harbor. This had only a momentary success in halting the Haitian advance. Shots were then fired over the heads of those in the front ranks. When this too failed to stop their approach, fire was directed into the ranks, resulting in the previously mentioned 34 casualties, and instant dispersal of the mob.

The affair at Aux Cayes made headlines in the American press, and evoked yet another round of demands from the Anti-Occupation lobby for action by President Hoover to investigate and end the "mess" there. At an "off the record" press conference, Secretary Stimson referred to the Haitian situation as "another baby he found on his doorstep."<sup>5</sup>

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U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Memorandum of Press Conference by Secretary of State, Dec. 6, 1929.





He went on to say that the whole affair had started before he took office and that consequently he was not very familiar with it.

The next day, December 7, 1929, The New York Times reported that the President was preparing a special message to Congress concerning the relations of the United States with the Republic of Haiti.



IX. The President's Commission.

Sur la vaste mer un bateau est ballotté par la tempête. Le patron envoie le mousse en haut du mat pour plier une voile. Le mousse crie "Je vais tomber, la tête me tourne." Le patron lui dit: "Ne regarde pas en bas, regarde les étoiles."

- Francois Dalencour, "Le Sauvetage National Par le Retour à la Terre."

A veritable flood of protest and advice concerning the situation in Haiti converged on Washington even before the first of the news from there became known in December, 1929. On October 3, the Union Patriotique addressed an open letter to President Hoover criticizing past American influence in (1) President Borno's election and re-election (said to be unconstitutional because he was not born of a Haitian father), (2) the electoral laws enacted, (3) the reform of the judiciary, (4) taxes, (5) immigration, and (6) the budget. The letter ended with a fervent demand for immediate legislative elections. A telegram from the "Save Haiti League of America" quickly echoed the Union Patriotique's letter, and urged that the President force Haiti to have elections. The "Labor Open Forum of Rochester" protested the continued presence of American Marines in Haiti.

The "American Friends Service Committee" of Philadelphia urged the appointment of a commission to investigate affairs in Haiti, and recommended that Paul H. Douglas serve as a member. Mr. Douglas advised the President that no appointment to the proposed commission should be made from resi-



dents of Haiti, for they would be unable to give unbiased statements for fear of reprisal from President Borno. He also warned that American officials in the Occupation would show only the favorable side of affairs.

On December 6, Dr. Gruening, then with the Portland Evening News, warned that the fate of commissions is usually to be taken in by those they are investigating, and he declared that the first step toward a satisfactory solution of the problem in Haiti must be the removal of the military High Commissioner, General Russell, and the installation of a civilian in his place. The American Civil Liberties Union stated that the facts were already known, and that it was unnecessary to send a commission to investigate. It urged a number of recommendations to alleviate the intolerable conditions alleged to have been imposed on Haitian citizens by the American Occupation.

The "Greater New York Federation of Churches" petitioned the President, expressing concern lest the United States violate the pledges made in the Kellogg Pact in its dealings with Haiti. The "Colored Unity League of Jersey City" accused the President of complicity in the muzzling of free speech, unlawful imprisonment, and probable murder then being inflicted on patriots in Haiti. Teachers should be sent there, it said, not Marines. Professors and students of New York's Union Theological Seminary addressed a letter protesting American occupation of Haiti as a violation of American ideals of liberty and justice, and charging that "American





prices" were responsible for killing Haitians and preventing the growth of democratic government there.

On December 8, 1929, President Hoover requested the Congress to authorize and fund a presidential commission to study and review American policies in Haiti. The Congress responded on December 18, by passing a Joint Resolution (H.J. Res. 170) providing for such a commission and appropriating \$50,000 for its expenses. No policy guidance was attached to the resolution.

The President's request had left the door open for congressional representation on the proposed commission, but the offer was rather studiously ignored. The attitude of most members of Congress seemed to be that Haiti was a problem generated by the Executive branch, and that therefore it should be resolved by the Executive. There was remarkably little debate over the proposed commission in either House.

Announcement that a commission would be formed brought on another flurry of White House mail concerning the makeup of that commission. Great pressure was applied to place a negro on the commission. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sent a telegram stating that "2,000,000 American citizens of negro descent" felt that they should be represented on any commission appointed. Oswald Garrison Villard of The Nation "demanded" representation not only by American negroes, but by Haitians as well. Any other similar recommendations and demands were made.



In response to a State Department request, General Russell forwarded President Borno's views on the matter. The Haitian President stated that he was not averse to a negro serving on the commission, but that he had not changed his views to the effect that Haitians in general looked down upon the American negro. He further stated that he most definitely did not want to see an American negro sent to Haiti in a Treaty or U.S. Government position.<sup>1</sup>

The question of appointing a negro to the commission was given serious consideration, but it appears that the following confidential memorandum from Dr. L.S. Rowe, Director General of the Pan American Union, was decisive in influencing the President against the naming of a negro.

I beg to recommend that no negro be included in this Commission. The practice of appointing a negro as United States Minister to Haiti has never been well received in that country and now that this practice has been abandoned, I hope that it will be possible to avoid a negro on the Commission. Rightly or wrongly, the educated Haitians regard themselves as far superior to the American negro.<sup>2</sup>

On February 7, 1930, President Hoover announced that the Haitian Commission would be comprised of W. Cameron Forbes as Chairman, Henry P. Fletcher, Elie Vezina, James

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Russell Secretary of State, December 25, 1929.  
<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Dr. L.S. Rowe to Acting Secretary of State, Memorandum, January 21, 1930.





Kerney, and William Allen White. He further announced that "in cooperation with Mr. Forbes, I have requested Dr. R.E. Moton, President of Tuskegee Institute, on behalf of the Institute and such other educational affiliations as he may suggest, to undertake an exhaustive investigation into the educational system of Haiti, with a view to recommendations for the future."3 Dr. Moton, of course, was one of America's most distinguished negro educators.

W. Cameron Forbes, a wealthy Boston lawyer, had served in the American administration of the Philippines from 1904 to 1913, the last four years of that period as Governor-General. In 1921 he had been a co-chairman on the Wood-Forbes Commission to the Philippines. When Senator McCormick recommended, in 1924, that a commission be sent to Haiti, Forbes' name headed his list of recommended appointees. Governor Forbes was a long-time friend of President Hoover.

Henry P. Fletcher had a long and distinguished career in government service behind him. In 1898 he was a private in Colonel Roosevelt's Rough Riders, and he later saw military service in the Philippines. His diplomatic career included assignments in Cuba, China, Mexico, Chile, Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg. He was Chairman of the United States delegation to the Fifth Pan-American Conference in Santiago,

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3 U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Presidential Press Statement, February 7, 1930.



while, in 1923, and was a delegate to the Sixth Pan-American Conference in Havana, in 1928. For a brief period during the Harding Administration he had served as Secretary of State.

Elie Vezina was a self-made man, who had made his money in newspapers. He was born in Canada, was active in Roman Catholic organizations, and he described himself as a "student of Haitian affairs."

James Kerney was a respected newspaper man, editor and author, who had written among other things a book entitled The Political Education of Woodrow Wilson.

William Allen White was the best-known of all the appointees, through his prolific writing. He was the editor and publisher of the Emporia Gazette, and a biographer of Woodrow Wilson. He was renowned as a champion of "the common man."

The inclusion of three newspaper men on the five member commission was probably no accident. In the winter of 1929-1930, Haiti was a topic of frequent concern in the American press. Most, but not all, editorial comment was negative concerning American policy there, and it may well have been the Administration's hope to lower the journalistic voices raised against it by the character of its appointees to the commission.

On February 13, 1930, the Union Patriotique wrote to Senator Borah requesting that he use his influence to have the United States Government pay the expense of legal counsel



to represent the opposition in hearings before the Commission. Senator Borah forwarded the request to Mr. Forbes, who replied that "the Commission is not taking any counsel along and proposes upon arrival in Haiti to give all elements an opportunity to offer a fair presentation of their views. We understand that there are many very competent Haitian lawyers in Haiti."<sup>4</sup>

Advice and recommendations poured in to the Commission during the two-week period between the naming of the members and their departure for Haiti, including a long memorandum from Emily Greene Balch. Miss Balch warned the Commission not to be led astray by those whom the Occupation would push forward, but to seek out those of whom the American and Borno officials were most hostile and contemptuous.

Armed with this and other good advice, and a box of books and official reports concerning the Occupation, the Commission, accompanied by four correspondents representing the Associated Press, The New York Times, The Baltimore Sun, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference, sailed from Miami on February 25, 1930, on board the USS Rochester. The Rochester, during Spanish-American War days, had been the battleship New York, and had served as Admiral Sampson's flagship at the battle of Santiago, when the United States first established its utter dominance in the Caribbean.

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U. S. J. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Forbes Union Patriotique, Feb. 22, 1930.





## XX. The Occupation on Trial.

What has the Department of Horticulture done for the development of our important native fruits like citrus, mangoes, avacadoes, coconuts, and vegetables? Why the present head of this department Mr. Leonard spends 95% of his funds in landscaping and pays no attention on industrial fruits and vegetables? How many mules have been born in five years? What happened to the flock of white Leghorn and Rhode Island chickens brought in from the States? Who can patronize the dairy at the price milk is sold? How many among the American personnel can talk French enough to make themselves understood?

- Anonymous complaints registered with the President's Commission.

The weather on the trip south through the Bahama channel was good, and the Commissioners were entertained by the Commanding Officer of the Rochester at dinner and motion pictures shown on deck. They seemed to enjoy the relaxing voyage, but nevertheless they spent a great deal of time reviewing the material they had brought with them, and in preparing the press release they intended to make on arrival in Port-au-Prince. With so many strong-willed and articulate individuals on the Commission, this task was no easy task. The President's charge to them had been that "the primary question which is to be investigated is when and how we are to withdraw from Haiti. The second question is what we shall do in the meantime."1 The press

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1 U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Statement by President Herbert Hoover, February 4, 1930.



release they eventually agreed upon was cabled, apparently more as a courtesy than anything else, to the State Department several days prior to the scheduled arrival in Haiti. It took the President's charge as a point of departure, and stated that the purpose of their investigation was to determine the progressive steps necessary for (1) placing all activities of government in the hands of persons chosen for the purpose by Haitian authorities, (2) the withdrawal of United States officers and employees from the Haitian service, and (3) the termination at the earliest possible moment of the American Military Occupation. The Commission's draft concluded with a promise to hear all sides of the controversy, in public or private hearings. A great deal of evident labor went into careful choosing of words, and the Commissioners were undoubtedly angered when, the day prior to arriving in Port-au-Prince, Acting Secretary of State J.P. Cotton (whom Forbes probably considered his junior) cabled that the Department did not desire to have their suggested statement released, and provided instead one of its own. In a huff, Forbes replied that no statement would be released to the press on arrival.

The Rochester anchored at Port-au-Prince at 1:30 in the afternoon of February 28, 1930, firing a 21 gun salute with the Haitian ensign at the fore. Fort National returned the salute. In top hats and tail coats the Commissioners left the ship accompanied by the firing of another salute of 19 guns (for their ambassadorial rank) and the playing





of the national anthem by the ship's band.

The pier where the Commissioners landed had been roped off and was clear of all persons with the exception of the official welcoming party. Outside of the pier enclosure and lining the route taken by the official automobiles thousands of people were massed. The Commissioners were cheered and there were many cries of "Vive le President Hoover!" A parade formed in their wake and huge banners were displayed which read: "Down With the Council of State!" "Long Live Senators Borah, Blaine, King, Shipstead and All Friends of Haiti!" "No More High Commissioner!" "Jesus Save Haiti!" and "End the Occupation!"<sup>2</sup>

The Haitian press gave extensive coverage to the arrival of the Commissioners and to all their subsequent activities in the country. Biographies and pictures of each Commissioner were published in almost all of the papers, and in La Presse of March 3, 1930, a large front page picture showed the Commissioners in a formal pose in front of the American Legation. In spite of the dust and heat of the Haitian capital, all were wearing top hats, tails, and high-collared shirts. All carried canes.

During the Commission's presence in Haiti, attacks on the Borno Government and the American Occupation continued unabated in the opposition press. Editorials quoted every-

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<sup>2</sup> The Baltimore Sun, March 1, 1930.



one from Abraham Lincoln to Senator Borah, and the demands were always the same: "Désoccupation!" "Président d'Haiti élu par le peuple!" "Election législatives!" "A bas le Martiniquais!" (Referring to Borno, whose father was supposed to have been born in Martinique.) "A bas la isère!" "Respectez notre souveraineté!"

The first hearings before the Commission were held on March 1. Typical is the following statement made in opposition to the Occupation.

My voice is not strong enough, my words are not sufficiently strong, to express to you all the atrocities of the American Occupation in Haiti for almost fifteen long consecutive years. I apply to you, who are charged with healing wounds which are still bleeding; the indignation of the Haitian people is very great....

The American Occupation ruined our finances, introduced black misery in all the families, put the Haitian trade in bankruptcy and closed the doors to Haitian industries. The true citizens are discarded from public affairs; public offices are given only to those capable of any capitulations.... You who are guided by the laws of the starry flag, in the name of humanity and of the civilized people, kindly remove us from the highly humiliating yoke of this odious Occupation which deprives us of what is most sacred and most dear in the life of a people, that is its liberty and its independence.<sup>3</sup>

On Sunday, March 2, the opposition staged a parade of Haitian women for the benefit of the Commissioners, but only Mr. White was present to observe it, the others being

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3. U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Statement of Salomon R. André, March 1, 1930.





away to observe a polo match or at tennis. Mr. White stood with uncovered head outside the Commissioners' hotel, the Excelsior, while the women filed by. More banners were displayed, inscribed: "Sacred Heart of Jesus, Save Haiti!" and "Women of Haiti, Pray for Justice and Liberty for Haiti."

One of the marchers, dressed all in black, stepped in front of White and said: "Please, Commissioner, deliver us." As she spoke, she bowed. Mr. White took her by the hand, bowed himself, and as she backed away, touched his fingers to his lips and wafted a kiss to her. This act was followed by wild cheers and cries of "Long Live the Commission!" and "Long Live President Hoover!"<sup>4</sup>

Illustrating that in reporting as in so many other things the point of view of the observer is everything, William Allen White's gesture was interpreted in the Haitian press (in English) as follows:

Our Colours Kissed by a Member of the Commission! Lafayette, here we are! shouted the American troops landing in France. The forgetfulness of Savannah is nearly redeemed: yesterday afternoon before the Commissioners' Hotel, one of its members respectfully touched his lips to our Flag presented by an aged woman. Our Colours kissed by a Representative of President Hoover! The greatest hopes cheerfully gallop in wanton hearts: our blue and red on American lips! Throughout the Republic the Haitian People will be sincerely moved in learning Mr. White's healthful gesture.<sup>5</sup>

The "forgetfulness of Savannah" refers to the Haitian

<sup>4</sup> The New York Times, March 4, 1930.

<sup>5</sup> Le Nouvelliste, Port-au-Prince, March 3, 1930.





legend that black troops transported by the French from Saint Domingue helped fight the British at Savannah during the American Revolution. A few blacks were apparently taken there on French ships, but none were landed and none engaged in any of the fighting.

Hearings in Port-au-Prince were held in government buildings and the rooms were always packed when public testimony was given. A young stenographer who worked for the Commission in Haiti recalled many years later that the doors and windows were blocked by a sea of intent black faces. The air inside the rooms was stifling, and one time or another every member of the Commission's staff was ill. It is not supposed that the Commissioners themselves were immune to the "traveler's disease" in the tropics. The nights were so hot that Mr. Forbes regularly slept in this room in the Excelsior and slept on board the Roches- which remained at the Commissioners' disposal throughout their mission. In spite of the heat and the discomfort, hearings were held every day except Sunday while the Commission was in Port-au-Prince. First priority was given to claims by the opposition, and charges against the Occupation were ordinarily heard by the full Commission, while the Occupation's replies to those charges were frequently heard by only a single Commissioner. This apparent bias in the proceedings was strongly resented by General Russell and other treaty officials. Complaints to the Commission from the State Department fell largely on deaf ears,



however. In an early but undated interview the following exchange took place between Mr. Constantin Mayard, ex-resident of the Chamber of Deputies, and Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher. Have the representatives of the United States tried to change the language and the religion of the people?

M. Mayard. Yes. Even though the French language had been recognized as the official language of the country, in all the departments the English language only is used. [This, unquestionably, was a bald-faced lie.]

Mr. Fletcher. Are the documents not written both in French and in English?

M. Mayard. The General's report is in both languages, but it is easier to obtain an English copy than a French one....In public schools, English is used instead of French.

Mr. Fletcher. A lack of tact.

M. Mayard. Exactly.

Mr. Fletcher. They have no diplomatic tact because they are soldiers.

M. Mayard. ... All the economic measures taken by the American Financial Adviser and by the High Commissioner on taxes are prepared in full and submitted to be accepted by the Council of State. The taxpayer is not consulted.

Mr. Fletcher. Taxation without representation.

M. Mayard. ... It is the military occupation that is causing the trouble. If God and all the Saints were President, nothing would be well with the military occupation.<sup>6</sup>

On March 3, 1930, the editor and publisher of Le Nou-





Celliste, Mr. Ernest G. Chauvet, appeared before the Commission.

Gov. Forbes. I would like to know if you enjoy freedom of the press.

M. Chauvet. Absolutely not. Though we have been able to print something since the Commission arrived.

Mr. Kerney. So we have done something for Haiti already....

M. Leger. [Haitian counsel for the opposition] How long did you stay in jail without any trial?

M. Chauvet. Once 40 days, another 16 days, and another 7 or 6 days.

Mr. Kerney. Don't you have the right by habeas corpus to get out?

M. Chauvet. Not under martial law. The bond for pressmen is set at \$5,000, that is the lowest bond, but for any other criminal, murderer, and all, the highest sum is \$300 - any criminal and any murderer can get out for that but we have to put up \$5,000.

Mr. Kerney. They must think that newspaper men are rich...?

French Catholic priests testified during the first week of hearings in Port-au-Prince, and stated their dissatisfaction with the amount of public support given the Church during the period of the American occupation. They charged that the funds provided were inadequate to pay the salaries of priests, particularly those outside the principal cities. Complaints were lodged concerning taxes. Recently the government had begun to levy import duties on goods brought into



the country by the Church, and this was a particular irritant. There were statements expressing distrust of the instruction given in the Service Technique schools by predominately protestant American teachers.

The Commissioners heard from spokesmen from literally dozens of opposition political groups, each claiming to represent "all the Haitian people." A frequent warning placed in the transcript was that if the forthcoming presidential election was accomplished by the Council of State, American machine guns would have to sink Haiti in blood. The activities of the opposition were not confined to speech making before the Commissioners, however. Police reports for the city of Port-au-Prince tell of frequent political meetings and rallies. A typical program was that of the Haitian Young Peoples Patriotique League on March 4, where vicious personal attacks were made on President Borno and General Russell, interspersed with the reading of poetry. At the conclusion of this meeting, a colored American newsman and his wife stood on a table for the purpose of counting the crowd. They were roundly applauded.<sup>8</sup>

Le Nouvelliste paid frequent tribute to sympathetic representatives of the American press in Haiti to cover the hearings. One such was Helena Weed Hill, of The Nation. In addition to attacking Marines for drunkenness and other

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<sup>8</sup> U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Chief of Police, Port-au-Prince, to Commandant, Garde d'Haiti, March 5, 1900.



mmoral behavior, she went after civilians in the treaty services as well.

The country is teeming with merry young strip-lings, "technical experts," who are receiving double and treble the amount their qualifications would ever bring them at home, while the real work is being done by underpaid Haitians. The native resentment at seeing the important positions filled by such whipper-snappers with Haitians tolerated only in the lowest grades is easy to comprehend.<sup>9</sup>

From the record it appears that no treaty official appeared before the Commission in the first week of its hearings in Port-au-Prince. Except, therefore, for whatever mitigating influence informal conversation with American Occupation officials might have had, the picture painted for the Commissioners was somber, threatening, and decidedly anti-Occupation. Letters poured in from all sorts of strange organizations - from "Haitians Resident in Cuba," "The Students National Association of the Dominican Republic," "La Ligue de la Jeunesse Patriote," and many others. All carried the same message. The United States had failed to prepare Haiti for self-government after 14 years of occupation.

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<sup>9</sup>. Quoted in The Baltimore Sun, editorial, March 16, 1930.





## XI. A Political Settlement.

We informed the opposition leaders that we had been assured that M. Borno was not seeking re-election and was willing to accept a neutral non-partisan as his successor. We said we were willing to help find such a man. They all doubted that he could be found. M. Hudicourt asked with an air of finality: "Where are we to find this white blackbird?" But they agreed to think it over and return the next day with their answer. They returned the following day and said they were willing to try to reach a compromise and asked us what we had to propose. We then suggested that, as they were the leaders of the combined opposition and claimed to speak and act for their followers, they should prepare a list of five neutral men, any one of whom they would accept as Provisional President. M. Borno would be asked to prepare a similar list. If one man's name appeared on both lists, he would be the merle blanc.

- Henry P. Fletcher, "Quo Vadis Haiti?" July, 1930.

On March 6, 1930, General Russell sent a confidential memorandum to Chairman Forbes in which he made reference to the adamancy and belligerent attitude of the opposition politicians, and warned of the danger of violent outbreaks and possible bloodshed. He then outlined a compromise plan originally suggested by Colonel Frank E. Evans, USMC, the Commandant of the Garde d'Haiti. The plan essentially called for the election of a Provisional President, a political neutral satisfactory to both the opposition and the government, who would then be responsible for the calling of legislative elections. The Provisional President would agree in advance to step down in favor of a president regularly elected by the new legislature.

The Commissioners seemed favorably inclined to the plan



and General Russell then took it up with President Borno. The Haitian President agreed to give it a try, but stated that for psychological reasons the Commission should make the proposal to the opposition politicians. He assured General Russell that no difficulty would be encountered in the Council of State.

Adopting the plan as its own, the Commission drafted a long message to Washington on the evening of March 7. The rough draft of the message was addressed to "The Secretary of State, for the Confidential Information of the President." This was lined out, however, by Forbes, who wrote in its place "The President, Washington, D.C." Apparently the Chairman was not taking any chances on further interference in the Commission's work by the Acting Secretary of State. The text of the message follows. Its classification: "Strictly Confidential."

Your Commission finds the situation here critical, the public greatly inflamed and representatives of large groups of people organized in various patriotic leagues have appeared in public sessions and without exception stated that they would not accept any election of president by the Council of State, an appointive body which has acted as a legislature here for about twelve years and which has elected and re-elected President Borno. The demand made by practically all those who have appeared and supported as advisable by the Archbishop speaking for the church, is for the restoration of representative government by a legislature elected by the people and their choice of a President, which they say is the only way of satisfying the popular demand, and that any other course will not be accepted by the people and will be opposed with acts of violence. Officers of the Marines, the High Commissioner himself and General Evans representing the National Guard, which is the Haitian police force, all agree the situation is tense and





likely to result in bloodshed; in the present state of the public mind some small incident might precipitate serious consequences. With the approval of General Russell, your Commission has convened a group of five leaders representing the various patriotic leagues, and represented to us as likely to be able to control the situation, and at our suggestion they have issued a statement calculated to calm the public mind.

Further, it was suggested to them, after considerable discussion, that a compromise candidate for the Presidency be found - some man wholly out of politics, neutral and satisfactory to both sides, and willing to accept the election as President until a duly elected legislative body can be convened.

On one hand the objection of representatives of Patriotic leagues, that they and the public would not recognize the election by the Council of State, has been met by their proposal to convene delegates from the country at large who will endorse and select the candidate agreed upon. On the other hand, after this has been done, the plan is for President Borno to secure the election of the compromise candidate by the Council of State. The new President is to agree to call the election of the two legislative chambers as soon as possible and then present his resignation, permitting the National Assembly to elect the new President. This program has the complete endorsement of General Russell, who believes that President Borno will accept it. The five representatives we have talked with are confident they can find the necessary candidate satisfactory to both sides and acceptable to the general public. This plan contemplates that only the candidate designated by the plan outlined above and elected by the Council of State should be recognized by the United States as the President on the understanding that the plan will be carried out in its entirety.

In endeavoring to effect a compromise which will satisfy the popular demand and at the same time comply with the provisions of the constitution with regard to the election of a President, we have made it clear to the five representatives with whom we have discussed the matter that we are acting entirely unofficially. Commission understands that General Russell approves and is wiring the Department to this effect.

If this plan meets your approval, the Commission would appreciate a reply at the earliest moment, because of the danger of premature publicity which is imminent. Time is very short, because the leaders desire to submit and receive from the public assemblies throughout the Republic the endorsement and



approval of the compromise candidate before the fourteenth of April.

The Commission is leaving for a tour of the Republic on Sunday morning but arrangements have been made to receive your reply promptly. Please reply through USS Rochester. Forbes, Chairman. <sup>1</sup>

The next day, March 8, the President of the United States wired Forbes as follows: "I entirely concur in the recommendations of your telegram on March seventh."<sup>2</sup> On Sunday morning, March 9, the Commissioners left Port-au-Prince by motor car for a trip across the country, believing that the political compromise had been accepted by both sides. Arrangements were made to release details of the plan to the press in the afternoon of March 9, and this was done. On Monday morning when they arrived at Hinche, they were completely taken by surprise when they learned that President Borno had sent a telegram to all Prefects in the country branding as false the reports that a provisional government would be formed, and stating that no legislative elections would take place prior to the nearest date fixed by the Constitution (January 10, 1932).

A series of frantic telegrams and telephone calls passed between Chairman Forbes and General Russell, and after some decision the Commissioners continued their trip to Cape Haitien. Under pressure from General Russell, President

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Forbes to President Herbert Hoover, March 7, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., President Herbert Hoover to Forbes, March 8, 1930.





orno capitulated late in the evening on March 10. Thus it may be seen that not only did Occupation officials propose the compromise plan eventually put into effect, but they negotiated its acceptance by the Haitian Government. This was carefully concealed from the press, which gave all credit to the Commissioners. General Russell and his treaty officials were pictured as completely taken by surprise when the plan was announced.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission's reception at Cape Haitian was marked by more parades and more slogans. An organization of Haitian women presented Governor Forbes with a red silk banner inscribed: "God Bless President Hoover." Several of the Commissioners found time to visit Christophe's Citadel. In Washington, however, in spite of President Hoover's prompt approval, receipt of the plan for a political settlement touched off a flurry of activity in the State Department.

Objections were raised to what was interpreted as a "secret promise" to support the compromise candidate in advance of his election, and to the plan's failure to take into consideration the constitutional requirements concerning Haitian elections - particularly the requirement for the timing by the President of "an even numbered year" for the holding of legislative elections. These objections were mailed to the Commission, and the Commission replied in a long message marked "Confidential for the President and the

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<sup>3</sup>. The Baltimore Sun, March 10, 1930.





Acting Secretary of State."

The Commission argued that it was not making secret promises, but merely taking action to redress grievances of long standing. The prompt restoration of representative government was held to be essential if fresh violence was to be avoided.

For our own protection, we wish to know, before going any farther whether or not our government is going to insist that the new President of Haiti must wait until next year to call legislative elections to be held in 1932. If the Department intends to insist on this interpretation the Commission is unanimously of the opinion that the compromise plan will be jeopardized and measures which the President would be reluctant to order may become necessary.

We must earnestly submit that the Haitian constitution was written and adopted to secure representative government and that no technicality affecting merely the time set for elections should deprive the people of their fundamental constitutional rights. Further action awaits your reply....<sup>4</sup>

The message was signed by all members of the Commission. In Washington it was discussed at length by President Hoover and Acting Secretary of State Cotton. Final approval was cabled to Port-au-Prince on March 14. The Commission then sent a message expressing its gratification and stating its intention to leave Haiti on March 16. The Acting Secretary requested that the Commissioners delay their departure until definitive agreements were secured from all political elements in Haiti. Forbes replied that he considered the work

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<sup>4</sup> U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Forbes to the President and the Secretary of State, March 14, 1930.



f the Commission in Haiti to be at an end, that farewell calls had been paid, and that a delay in the Commission's departure would only hurt the situation. He stated that if special documents or signatures were desired, General Russell was in a position to secure them. The Commission departed as planned.

In the meantime, General Russell had secured the names of five provisional candidates from the opposition, and from this list President Borno selected Mr. Eugene Roy. His election by the Council of State was scheduled for April 14, 1930.

Editorial comment in the American press concerning the settlement varied. The Washington Post was not persuaded.

... The politicians of Haiti are a bad lot, and will never be satisfied until American influence has been wiped out. Since the treaty remains in effect until 1936 the United States must continue to exercise authority in Haiti, whether the native legislature functions or not. It remains to be seen whether the restoration of the legislature will improve the Haitian situation.<sup>5</sup>

The New York Telegram took a more sanguine view.

The Haitian settlement is one of the quickest and most brilliant examples of diplomacy in our history. In method and aim it represents a reversal of fifteen years of Yankee imperialism there.

Unwilling to take on his shoulders responsibility for undoing the diplomatic and administrative blunders of preceding administrations, President Herbert Hoover

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5. The Washington Post, editorial, March 16, 1930.





appointed a commission to investigate and advise him.

That in itself was enough to show the breakdown of the State Department and the Marine Corps regime, which is subject to the President but upon whose advice he apparently could no longer depend.... To meet the emergency the President gave the commission power to clean up the mess. It did so with the help of Haitian independence leaders and despite the trickery of Dictator Borno.<sup>6</sup>

For better or worse, a political compromise had been struck which in effect gave the Haitian opposition virtually everything it had demanded. While the compromise itself was suggested by the Occupation, the decision to meet the demands of the opposition was taken by the Commission, and after hearing in depth but one side of the Haitian controversy. The bulk of the testimony and written reports of American treaty officials and the Haitian Government, replying to the charges levied by the opposition, was presented to the Commission after its return from the overland trip to Cape Haitian. Shortly before the Commission left Haiti, some 18 spokesmen for the government party, the National Progressives, appeared before Governor Forbes and one other Commissioner. One member of the group, Colonel Auguste Nemoures, later informed General Russell that Forbes told the group that it was unnecessary to make any statement, since the Commission "had already made up its mind."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>.The New York Telegram, editorial, March 17, 1930.  
<sup>7</sup>.U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 190-1939, 838.00/2636, Russell to Department of State, No. 173, May 26, 1930.



In all, the Commission spent 15 days in Haiti. Hearings at which the opposition stated its grievances were before the entire Commission and anti-Occupation forces were permitted to appoint counsel to conduct their attack on American officials. Those officials were not permitted to cross-examine their accusers or publicly refute the charges that were made. This was particularly unfortunate inasmuch as the attacks of the opposition and what was interpreted as the Commission's concurrence therein, were given wide publicity in both the Haitian and the American press. The High Commissioner's well constructed and lengthy statement answering the charges made against the Occupation was not made public because the Commission considered it "controversial."



## XII. The Case for the Defense.

Never in the course of our history has there been so much liberty, so much humanity, so much general safety, so much guarantee of life and property than under the present regime. No one dares dispute this fact.

- Memorandum by the National Progressive Party, Port-au-Prince, March 7, 1930.

The "other side of the story" in Haiti, what might be called the defense of the Occupation, does not appear in the report later issued by the President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, nor was there ever any effort to make that defense public. As previously shown, the defense was not permitted to influence the basic findings of the Commission, and this was, perhaps, as it should have been, given President Hoover's charge to the Commissioners. The decision to withdraw was made in Washington prior to the naming of the Commission, and in that respect the "study and review" was purely pro forma. There is no doubt, however, that in failing to give Occupation officials an equal opportunity to place themselves on public record, a serious injustice was done to them and the public was misled both as to the record of the American Occupation and the probable effects precipitate withdrawal of that Occupation would have on the Haitian people. Not logic and not humanitarian instinct governed, but political expediency. This was recognized and acknowledged, privately, in Washington. When General Russell's reclama on the Commission's report arrived





at the State Department it was sympathetically received. A memorandum from the Under Secretary (Mr. Cotton) to the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs (Mr. White) expressed that sympathy. Mr. Cotton concluded, however, that "I think this report should go to the Secretary and then be locked up as under the present state of affairs I do not know of anything we can do about it."<sup>1</sup>

A common theme in the testimony of pro-Occupation spokesmen concerned the peculiar social conditions existing in Haiti both prior to and after the intervention. The absence of a middle class, the existence of a small but voracious élite, the illiteracy and ignorance of the overwhelming mass of the Haitian people, were presented as virtually insurmountable problems which had no short-term solution and which vastly complicated the constructive work of the Occupation. Measures taken to build a modern and progressive society in Haiti were the very measures which drew the most fire from critics of the Occupation.

The treaty department which suffered the greatest criticism from the Haitian opposition, for reasons briefly touched upon before, was the Service Technique. Its director, Dr. George W. Freeman, appeared before the Commission on March 13, 1930. He spoke of the necessity of creating in Haiti a skilled middle class, and of the difficulties

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 93-1939, 838.00/2636, "JPC" to White, undated memorandum, (Date ?), 1930.



he had encountered in attempting to do just that. Fully 90 percent of the Haitian people derived their living from agricultural and industrial pursuits. Thus, logic demanded that Haiti's educational system be geared to satisfy the needs of that 90 percent. This was where the controversy lay with the élite, however, for the limited resources of Haiti did not permit the establishment of industrial and agricultural schools without some decline in the support given the existing school system.

In 1930 the Service Technique had more than 11,000 students enrolled in its schools, almost 8,000 of whom were in some 65 rural schools. The problems in supporting even such a modest school system in Haiti were enormous. There was an almost total lack of trained teachers. At the time the Service Technique was established, only two Haitians could be found in the entire country who had ever studied in an agricultural school. Malnutrition and absenteeism in the student body were serious obstacles. Staff members almost without exception had to be trained from the ground up, for educated Haitians would have nothing to do with the new system of schools. In spite of this, at the time of the Commission's visit to Haiti, the staff of the Service Technique was composed of 436 Haitians, 24 Americans, and 16 men of other nationalities, mostly French.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Statement of Dr. George W. Freeman, March 13, 1930.





Dr. Freeman, burned in effigy, slandered in the Haitian press, his work in Haiti, which he believed in deeply, about to be demolished, died in Port-au-Prince shortly after the commission's departure. .

Another treaty service which came in for more than its share of criticism was the Garde d'Haiti. The charge most often heard here was racial discrimination. Opposition politicians, particularly when addressing themselves to groups such as, for example, The Nation, or the NAACP, took the position that racial discrimination was unheard of in Haiti before the arrival of the Americans. Seeking vibrant chords, they claimed that Marine personnel serving with the Garde were overwhelmingly recruited from the southern part of the United States and were therefore racially "tainted." Other criticism centered on the Marines' alleged lack of education and knowledge of the local language.

As previously cited and documented by numerous examples drawn from Haitian history, perhaps no people drew the "color line" more ferociously than the Haitians themselves. In 1930, at the time of the Commission's visit, the best Haitian clubs were organized strictly on the basis of color. Even in the Garde, light-skinned Haitians refused to compete in athletic events with dark-skinned Haitians. These feelings were deeply ingrained and reinforced by memories of many bloody purges of mulattoes by blacks and blacks by mulattoes in the past. The treatment afforded Haiti's Syrian community is an example of racial discrimination at its worst.



The constitutional bar to white ownership of property in Haiti (removed in the American dictated Constitution of 1918, but reinstated after the withdrawal of the Occupation) was another fine example. These things were no secret to anyone even remotely familiar with the Haitian situation, yet time and time again the myth that it was the Americans who introduced the scourge of racial discrimination into the Black Republic was accepted at its face value. The rough draft of the Commission's Report contains the following penciled query, later lined out: "The colored line is drawn between the Haitians themselves. Should this be mentioned, and if so, how dealt with?"<sup>3</sup> General Russell discussed at length with Governor Forbes the hypocrisy associated with racial prejudice in Haiti.<sup>4</sup>

On March 13, the Commandant of the Garde d'Haiti, Major General Frank E. Evans (Colonel, USMC), tried to answer the criticisms directed against the Marines serving in the Garde. He furnished the following data in a "Compendium of Information on the Garde d'Haiti."<sup>5</sup>

Residence Southern States	24
Residence other States	92
Education Grammar School	16
Education High School	51
Education College	49
Average length of Service in Haiti	4.09 yrs.
Average length of Service in Garde	3.58 yrs.

3. J. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220.

4. Ibid., Russell to Forbes, March 13, 1930.

5. Ibid., "Compendium of Information on the Garde d'Haiti," March 13, 1930.



Average length of Service in military organization	13.15 yrs.
Language spoken, French	85
Language spoken, Creole	92
Language spoken, both	80
No Knowledge of either	13

In his testimony General Evans defended at length the practice of assigning enlisted Marines to the Garde as junior officers, and the record of the Garde in "Haitianizing" its officer corps as fast as qualified Haitians could be graduated from the Ecole Militaire. There were at that time 77 Haitian and 115 American officers in the Garde. He also produced evidence that showed that though Admiral Caperton's decree establishing martial law in Haiti was still technically in effect, trials before Provost Courts had practically ceased in 1923, there being none in 1924, 2 in 1925, 4 in 1926, and none since then. In response to a petty complaint, he admitted that the six horses the Garde kept in Port-au-Prince were used occasionally for polo, in addition to ceremonial duties such as parades, escort for the President's automobile, etc.

General Evans listed as the Garde's current functions and responsibilities: building its own barracks and outposts, fire protection, running the Ecole Militaire, communications, arms control and licensing, rural police, coast guard, repelling bandits, communal advice, prisons (until the late 1920's the insane were also cared for in the prisons), making its own uniforms, repairing its shoes, making soap, first aid, showing motion pictures in the interior sections of the country, requiring attendance of children at schools.





On March 11, the Financial Adviser-General Receiver, Mr. Sydney de la Rue, presented the Commissioners with a general report on the operation of his service. In it he attempted to answer in detail all the charges laid before the Commission by his Haitian critics. The philosophy implicit in his report is typical of that expressed by nearly all of the treaty officials in formal testimony before the Commission or in their own written reports.

I desire to record that, in the opinion of this office, the present political unrest in Haiti has been very largely caused by one condition, and one only. The elite politician does not know how to work, will not be taught to work, and does not desire to work. The newspapers giving accounts of the students of Damien in the November-December strike amply demonstrated this mentality. It is degrading to a Haitian aristocrat to work....

There is no unrest in Haiti today among the peasants except as has been artificially stimulated and inculcated by political agitation, by false promises, by wild stories, rumors, lies and definitely subversive propaganda. Men have come before the Commission, whose testimony I have read, and stated they represented thousands of people. This is a falsehood, and was cunningly stated to deliberately mislead the Commission. No meetings had ever taken place, no roster of names had ever been prepared, no actual society had ever been formed....

The fact of the matter is that there are possibly less than one-third enough jobs in Haiti to support the elite. This means that once every so often the elite must change places or starve. There is not enough money in Haiti to support all of them, without exploitation of the peasant or robbery of the public treasury. In this fact you have the explanation of the present condition, and you have the explanation of the future unrest which will occur in Haiti. The difficulty now is that the out-politician has been out a long time. He is likely to stay out a long time unless he can secure an immediate change. It is the last desperate throw of the dice to win back



place, or to die; and some of them are old....<sup>6</sup>

General Russell's report to the Commission, not published because, as previously stated, it was "controversial," seconded the points made by Mr. de la Rue in almost every instance. On the basis of the testimony and the documents given the Commission, opposition charges of malfeasance against the treaty officials evaporate into unsubstantiated and petty gripes. The overall impression gained from the record is that the treaty services were in fact doing remarkable work with the barest of material support and in the face of open hostility from those they were supposed to be aiding and "advising."

The most damning criticism of the Occupation, ironically, came from General Russell himself. In a letter to Governor Erbes on March 13, he stated his conviction that there were only two solutions to the Haitian problem - "get in, or get out." By "get in" he meant the establishment of an American military government and an end to the hypocrisy of the advisory system. Only in that way did he see the possibility of creating in Haiti the political and social conditions which were the stated goals of the Treaty of 1915. He concluded that "while tremendous advances have been made in the material rehabilitation of Haiti, and the happiness and prosperity of the mass of the Haitian people have been

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U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Report of the Financial Adviser-General Receiver to the Commission, March 11, 1920.





ecidedly increased, the Haitian people are, today, but  
little better fitted for self government than they were in  
915."7

By then, however, the decision had long been taken to  
get out."

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U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study  
and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, Russell  
Forbes, March 13, 1930.



XIII. The Commission's Report.

Their sophistication is charming but it is of the eighteenth century. Their pride has been justified by its works, but in the modern world it is doomed. The existence of this exotic society in the industrial civilization is a survival lovely but futile. Naturally, when the husky democracy of America meets all this caste pride, all this refinement of a departed French aristocracy in men and women of negro blood, the race prejudices of the American whether he be a soldier or civilian flares up. Instinctively he either sneers at what he sees or rejects what seems to be the vast amusing pretense of the mulatto rulers of Haiti. Bitternesses are inevitable. Understanding is tremendously handicapped. The wonder is that with our background we have done so well. Yet we may do better.

- Deleted material from an early draft of the Commission's Report.

At Washington, the Commission called as a body upon first the President, and then the State and Navy Departments. On March 28, 1930, President Hoover announced that he had accepted the recommendations of the Commission as the policy of the United States toward Haiti. The Commission's Report,



as published shortly thereafter, reviewed the situation in Haiti as the Commission saw it, recorded its high praise of "General Russell's whole-hearted and single-minded devotion to the interests of Haiti as he conceived them," deplored the seeming ingratitude of Haitian politicians for the work that had been done, and stated that the principal shortcoming of United States policy in the past had been "the failure of the Occupation to understand the social problems of Haiti, its brusque attempt to plant democracy there by drill and harrow, [and] its determination to set up a middle class - however wise and necessary it may seem to Americans."<sup>1</sup>

The formal recommendations and "sequent steps" presented in the Report follow.

The Commission recommends:

- (1) That the detail of Naval and Marine officers for all Haitian services be made for a minimum of four years and that an effort be made to secure Americans who will agree to continue employment in these services, so that upon the expiration of the treaty a force of American doctors, engineers, and police officers will be available for continued assistance to the Haitian Government should it then desire it;
- (2) That, if possible, some form of continuing appropriation for roads be urged for expenditure by the Haitian Government, with a policy that will provide enough funds to keep all existing roads in suitable repair before any new construction is undertaken; also in regard to further construction, that only roads most urgently needed to develop regions now settled and under cultivation be undertaken until the present economic

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the President's Commission for the Study and Review of Conditions in the Republic of Haiti, (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930) p. 19.





depression has passed;

(3) That the United States interpose no objections to a moderate reduction of the customs duties, internal revenue taxes, especially those imposed upon alcohol and tobacco, or to a reduction or elimination of the export tax on coffee, if the condition of the Treasury so warrants;

(4) That it be suggested to the Haitian Government that it employ one American adviser in each administrative department of the Government to perform such work as the respective Cabinet Minister may delegate to him, these officers to give expert advice and assistance to the Haitian Government, similar to that given by American officers in China, Siam, and Nicaragua, for naval matters in Brazil, and for educational matters in Peru;

(5) That, as an act of graciousness on the part of the United States, a moderate appropriation be made available during the continuance of the treaty to defray the cost of American civil officials in the Haitian Government service;

(6) That an appointment of a military attaché be made to the Legation when the time shall have arrived for a Minister to replace the High Commissioner, as the question of the preservation of order is of first importance and the Minister should have the advantage of his advice on military and police matters;

(7) That an adequate Legation building be constructed immediately by the Government of the United States in the city of Port au Prince to provide a suitable residence for the American Minister and appropriate offices.

#### Sequent Steps.

Complying with your instructions to suggest sequent steps to be taken with respect to the Haitian situation your commission offers the following:

(1) That the President declare that the United States will approve a policy, the details of which the United States officials in Haiti are directed to assist in working out, providing for an increasingly rapid Haitianization of the services, with the object of having Haitians experienced in every department of the Government ready to take over full responsibility at the expiration of the existing treaty;

(2) That in retaining officers now in the Haitian service, or selecting new Americans for employment therein, the utmost care be taken that only those free from strong racial antipathies should be preferred;

(3) That the United States recognize the temporary



President when elected, provided the election is in accordance with the agreement reached by your commission with President Borno and the leaders representing the opposition;

(4) That the United States recognize the President elected by the new legislature, acting as a National Assembly, provided that neither force nor fraud have been used in the elections;

(5) That at the expiration of General Russell's tour of duty in Haiti, and in any event not before the inauguration of the permanent President, the office of High Commissioner be abolished and a non-military Minister appointed to take over his duties as well as those of diplomatic representative;

(6) That whether or not a certain loss of efficiency is entailed, the new Minister to Haiti be charged with the duty of carrying out the early Haitianization of the services called for in the Declaration of the President of the United States above recommended;

(7) That as the commission found the immediate withdrawal of the Marines inadvisable, it recommends their gradual withdrawal in accordance with arrangements to be made in future agreement between the two Governments;

(8) That the United States limit its intervention in Haitian affairs definitely to those activities for which provision is made for American assistance by treaty or by specific agreement between the two Governments;

(9) That the new Minister be charged with the duty of negotiating with the Haitian Government further modifications of the existing treaty and agreements providing for less intervention in Haiti's domestic affairs and defining the conditions under which the United States would lend its assistance in the restoration of order or maintenance of credit.<sup>2</sup>

The Commission's Report was received with dismay and bitterness by the High Commissioner. In his view "the changes recommended by the Commission in its report are purely superficial and where they do not redundantly recommend steps

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<sup>2</sup>. Report of the President's Commission for the Study and Review of Conditions in the Republic of Haiti, (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930).





already or long since in effect, constitute a weakening of our Haitian policy....Such changes cannot but spell disaster to Haiti."<sup>3</sup> In regard to sequent step (4) above, it was General Russell's firm view that no election, before or after the intervention, had been held in Haiti by the Haitians without force and fraud, and that unless the United States Government supervised the election, force and fraud would certainly be employed again. In the wake of the Commission's departure he saw political conditions in Haiti worsening, and at a near-revolutionary state, with only the continued presence of American forces preventing a return to pre-1915 norms.

The Commissioners had finished their work, however. They had outlined a plan of when and how the United States should get out of Haiti, and what should be done there in the meantime.

In spite of the speculation of some of the journalists who accompanied the Commission, it seems clear that the Commission was from start to finish firmly in the hands of its chairman, W. Cameron Forbes. The following excerpt from a letter to Forbes from William Allen White, written shortly after the Commissioners parted company, substantiates such conclusion.

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. U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 930-1939, 838.00/2636, Russell to Secretary of State, No. 213, May 26, 1930.



In this whole matter I was a bound boy at a husking; out of my medium. All my life I have been in politics; but as an agitator for causes. This Commission was my first official effort. I could do nothing except furnish one vote out of five in the Commission, and perhaps have my influence with two or three others. But the language of diplomacy, the forms of diplomacy all were not merely out of my experience but deeply different from anything I had ever known. It has been my job all my life to make myself as plain, as forceful, as direct and convincing as possible in order to effect public sentiment. The weapons for making and controlling public sentiment are fairly familiar to me and I have used them with some success during my forty years in politics. But not one single weapon, not a rhetorical screw driver in my whole kit and accouterment was worth a tinker's resin dam on this job. But I hope I did back up Fletcher and you. I watched with "wonder, awe, and praise" as the old song says, the deftness of your touch, the sureness of your tact, the beauty of your maneuvers. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. I will never be of any use as a diplomat. But the look-in I got was worth the whole trip and I feel that it is almost a shame to take my per diem in the face of my experience....

I hear everywhere kind things about the work of the Forbes Commission. It is another jewel in your crown. I am proud to have been with you in this enterprise even if I could not contribute as much as I might have done in another kind of undertaking.<sup>4</sup>

Another letter caught up with the Chairman in the last few days before he departed Washington for his home. It was dated March 21, 1930, and was postmarked from a small town in western Pennsylvania where an old man, retired from the missionary service, was living out his final years. The letter began:

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<sup>4</sup> William Allen White to W. Cameron Forbes, April 9, 1930, Forbes Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.



Dear Governor-General:

How I wished you could have taken me with you to Haiti; I could have been the very kind of help you required, absolutely confided in by leading Natives; yet an admirer of High Commissioner, and best able to appreciate the special, and valuable reform brought about....

We must not leave Haiti to herself. Do call me down dear Governor? Am positively certain your plan will be THE REDEMPTION OF HAITI. They are CHILDREN OF NATURE.<sup>5</sup>

The letter was signed by L. Ton Evans.

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5. U. S., National Archives, President's Commission for Study and Review of Conditions in Haiti, Record Group 220, L. Ton Evans to W. Cameron Forbes, March 21, 1930.





XXIV. Haitianization and Withdrawal.

My great interest in Haiti and the Haitian people, after spending a quarter of my life in Haiti for the purpose of assisting it, makes me strongly regret the tearing down of the constructive work which has been carried on in Haiti by the United States Government during the past fifteen years, and which has materially added to the health, prosperity, and happiness of the Haitian people.

- Brigadier General John H. Russell, USMC, May 26, 1930.

On March 21, 1930, opposition delegates meeting in Port-au-Prince nominated Eugene Roy as their candidate for Provisional President of the Republic, in accordance with the agreement previously made. The Council of State was to have elected him on April 14, but as that date approached it became known that there was serious opposition to Roy in the Council. The opposition charged that President Borno was seeking to upset the agreement reached with the Commission by failing to exercise sufficient influence in the Council of State. The American State Department warned President Borno, through General Russell, that the United States would recognize Roy and no other as Provisional President. On the eve of the scheduled election, President Borno abruptly adjourned the Council of State until April 21. Postponing the election created a serious situation. In Port-au-Prince there was an outbreak of arson, and it continued even after the eventual election of Roy on April 21. That election was apparently assured only by the replacement of 10 of the



21 members of the Council by men pledged to the candidacy of Roy.

In the interim between the election and the inauguration, on May 15, 1930, the disturbances in Haiti deepened. The homes of American officials, including that of the Brigade Commander, were damaged or destroyed by fire. The Parisian Theatre in Port-au-Prince was razed to the ground. Threats were made by mail and by telephone to the lives and property of Americans and officials in the Borno Government. The disorders spread to other Haitian cities, and in Cape Haitian members of the Garde were attacked by mobs. In these circumstances President Borno requested the full exercise of martial law, but General Russell, aware of the reaction such a step would have in Washington, refused.

Intelligence reports linked the Haitian arsonists to Bolshevik groups in the United States, particularly the Crusader News Agency and the American Negro Labor Congress.<sup>1</sup> More respectable organizations such as the NAACP and the ACLU petitioned President Hoover to force the immediate implementation of the Forbes' proposals.

In June, 1930, the United States Commission on Education in Haiti, headed by Dr. Moton, arrived in Port-au-Prince. During a visit of several weeks, the Commission gathered material for its report to the President. Dr. Moton re-

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<sup>1</sup> U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 1930-1939, 838.00/2802, Russell to Department of State, No. 582, April 19, 1930.





commended the unification of educational systems in Haiti under the administration of the Haitian Ministry of Public Instruction, curtailment of the activities and expenditures of the Service Technique, and American assistance, primarily financial, in the establishment of an adequate educational system for Haiti. This Commission also gave its views as to the probable cause of what was increasingly recognized as the failure of the American Occupation.

Had there been less of a disposition to deal with the island as a conquered territory and more to help a sister state in distress, less of a desire to demonstrate efficiency and more to help others to the efficient direction of their own affairs, less of enforced control and more of helpful cooperation, the United States might today have greater reason to be proud of her intervention in the affairs of a struggling neighbor.<sup>2</sup>

The new Haitian Government under President Roy soon lost the temporary popularity it enjoyed after its coming to power. The press attacked the President personally for nepotism, graft, and a reluctance to set the date for legislative elections. Under pressure from the High Commissioner, however, the President issued a decree on July 11, calling for elections the following October.

On September 19, 1930, General Russell instructed all American officials in Haiti, by letter, concerning the attitude of the United States Government in the forthcoming

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<sup>2</sup>. Report of the United States Commission on Education in Haiti, (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930).



legislative elections. Noting that neither the Treaty of 1915 nor any other agreement or protocol provided for the United States lending assistance at any Haitian election, he directed that strict neutrality be observed. He also ordered that the Garde d'Haiti not participate in the elections in any way unless called upon by election officials to maintain order in the vicinity of the voting booths.<sup>3</sup>

Early on the morning of October 14, 1930, candidates at Port-au-Prince assembled their followers at their respective headquarters, plied them liberally with rum, and sent them to the polls in charge of selected leaders. This routine was repeated at voting places throughout the country. The elections were conducted without noticeable disorder and with American Marines confined to their barracks. The majority of the senators and deputies elected were from the ranks of those who had actively opposed the Occupation.

On November 1, General Russell tendered his resignation as High Commissioner, and on November 12, the day his post was officially abolished, he left the country. On November 6, Dr. Dana G. Munro, ex-Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs, whose appointment had been announced in July, assumed his duties as the American Minister to Haiti.

On November 19, 1930, the Haitian National Assembly met and elected a new President of the Republic. The man

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. U. S., Marine Corps Records, Correspondence File of First Provisional Brigade in Haiti, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., Proclamation by the High Commissioner, Sept. 19, 1930.



chosen was Sténio Vincent, who, ironically enough, had been President of the last National Assembly when that body was dissolved by Smedley Butler during the hassle over constitutional reform in 1917. The President-elect was one of the most outspoken critics of the American Occupation, editor of the foremost opposition newspaper, one of the founders of the Union Patriotique, and one of the authors and signers of the "Memoire" presented by that organization in 1921.

The popularity of the Vincent Government quickly waned, as had that of President Roy. Those members of the politically active élite who remained without an office in the new administration led a chorus of demands for the immediate dismantling of the Occupation. Instant Haitianization of the treaty services was the new "cause" almost before the old - legislative elections - was fully realized. Early in December, 1930, President Vincent submitted a plan to the American Minister which called for the complete Haitianization of Public Works in one year, and Public Health, the Service Technique, and the Financial Adviser's Office in two years. No mention was made of the Garde. The plan was considered "radical" by Dr. Munro and the State Department.

Against the advice of the American Minister, an attempt was made to negotiate a new convention extending American financial control in Haiti in the interest of foreign bondholders, but returning the other services to the Haitian government. This received a lukewarm reception from the





President, but it met with cold hostility from almost everyone else. Dr. Munro, who learned very quickly the difference between "being on the ground" and being at a desk in the State Department, reported that there was unquestionably a very strong desire that all Americans should leave Haiti at once, regardless of the effect upon public order or the efficiency of government. It was clear that the process of withdrawing from the position hitherto occupied in Haiti would be an exceedingly difficult and disagreeable one. He wrote that he looked forward to the meeting of the Haitian Congress in April, 1931, with a "feeling of dismay, which is only mitigated by the very evident terror with which the members of the Government anticipate this same event."<sup>4</sup>

In the spring of 1931, Senator King and Dr. Gruening, traveling with the "Committee on Cultural Relations," visited Haiti. These two patron saints of the anti-Occupation movement were met by enthusiastic crowds. In their speeches, however, they urged that the Haitians exercise some restraint in the issue of Haitianization, and this cost both of them their popularity with the more radical élite. There were actually attacks made on them in the Port-au-Prince press as a result of their unexpectedly moderate stand. Sic transit gloria munda!

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U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 930-1939, 838.00/2932, Munro to Secretary of State, No. 73, February 26, 1931.



When the new Congress convened it proved to be as unmanageable and violently anti-Occupation as had been feared. One of its first acts was to vote its members an expense allowance of \$100 per month retroactive to November of the previous year. The American Minister, backed by Secretary of State Stimson, directed the Financial Adviser to make no payments under this new law, and this, as may be imagined, intensified the bitter feelings of the Congress. Ominously, this Congress began attempts to control appointments and promotions within the Garde d'Haiti. This was but the first step toward politicizing the Garde and it threatened an eventual return to the military oligarchy of the past.

A bad and deteriorating relationship with the Haitian Government made it clear that the United States could not expect any whole-hearted cooperation in a policy to maintain the treaty services as efficient working organizations under Haitian control. American policy therefore changed, in the summer of 1931, to a policy which advocated turning over American directed services as soon as possible, regardless of the consequences to those services. A disillusioned Munro wrote: "I cannot see that it is any part of our duty toward Haiti to assist the Government in power by lending ourselves as a target for abuse."<sup>5</sup>

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. U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 930-1939, 838.00/2992, Munro to Secretary of State, No. 159, June 26, 1931.





Pressures in the United States also directed an acceleration of the Haitianization process. The ACLU sent a circular letter urging total American withdrawal; the NAACP demanded the appointment of a new commission "at least one member of which shall be an American negro" to devise steps for withdrawal of all American control in Haiti prior to the expiration of the treaty.<sup>6</sup> The "Unemployed Councils of USA," and the "Anti-Imperialist League" sent petitions. President Vincent appealed directly to President Hoover for more vigorous execution of the Forbes' proposals.

In this atmosphere a Haitianization accord was signed, as an executive agreement, on August 5, 1931, and martial law was formally repealed on that same date. Part of the accord provided that Haitian legislation no longer had to have the approval of the American Minister, and that payments no longer required the visa of the Financial Adviser. In Washington the accord was hailed as a step made possible by the remarkable progress achieved by the Haitians in the management of their own affairs, a step which put into effect the recommendations of the Forbes Commission far ahead of the time thought to have been possible. It turned over to the Haitians practically all of the treaty services, with the exception of the Garde and the Financial Adviser's

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. U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 930-1939, 838.00/2996, NAACP to President Hoover, July 9, 1931.



Office. Financial control was reduced, however, to that considered essential for the protection of bond holders. Negotiations were even then underway which would lead to the purchase of the National Bank by the Haitian Government and the replacement of United States responsibilities to the bond holders by those assumed by a civilian directorship. The Bank was eventually purchased, for \$1 million, but the bond holders refused to accept the second part of the plan, and consequently the last vestige of the American Occupation was destined to be a "fiscal representative" attached to the Haitian Government who officially represented, however, not the United States, but the bond holders. This arrangement continued through the 1930's.

In the fall of 1931, political activity in Haiti heightened, 1932 being another "even numbered year" and legislative elections being scheduled yet again. In November there were reports of political assassinations, and vicious attacks in the press on not only the Americans, but on President Vincent as well. Late in November, irony of ironies, the President ordered the dissolution of the Union Patriotique, alleging that it had departed from the purpose for which originally organized and had become a "political association."<sup>7</sup>

The elections were held on January 10, 1932, in typical Haitian fashion and government candidates were elected in

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<sup>7</sup> U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 930-1939, 838.00/3049, Munro to Secretary of State, Cable, November 23, 1931.



almost every district. A referendum attached to this same election restored to Congress, meeting in joint session, the power to amend the Constitution. Shortly after the new Congress convened in April, 1932, it exercised that power in an act of statesmanship extending its own terms of office by two years.

The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President of the United States was accompanied by a restatement of American policy toward Haiti. It was now the purpose of the United States Government "to get the Marines out of Haiti as quickly as possible," because it was believed such a gesture "would make a good impression on South America."<sup>8</sup> Withdrawal of the Marines would also, perhaps, still the clamor of domestic voices which, interestingly enough, were not lowered by the change of administrations in Washington.

On August 7, 1933, the new American Minister in Port-au-Prince, Norman Armour, signed an executive agreement which provided for the complete Haitianization of the Garde, withdrawal of all American Marines, and inauguration of the fiscal representative" by October 1, 1934. Not long after, fresh Haitian demands were made for an immediate withdrawal of the Marines and an end to all financial control, but to this not even Mr. Roosevelt was willing to accede.

In April, 1934, President Vincent traveled to Washington

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. U. S., National Archives, State Department Decimal File, 930-1939, 838.00/3127, Memo of telephone conversation between Francis White and Norman Armour, April 5, 1933.





and there, on April 17, the two Presidents issued a joint statement concerning "the policy of the good neighbor" as it applied to Haiti. There were no significant modifications to the existing plan, though President Roosevelt did announce that he was requesting the Congress to authorize a gift of Marine Brigade property to the people of Haiti. This property, valued at a modest \$100,000, consisted mainly of the Brigade's weapons in Haiti. The Congress later approved the gift.

President Roosevelt repaid President Vincent's visit on July 5, 1934, when he arrived in Cape Haitian aboard the USS Houston. After brief ceremonies and discussions ashore, it was announced that, at the request of President Vincent, command of the Garde would be turned over on August 1, instead of October 1, and American forces would be withdrawn by August 15, 1934.

On August 6, the Marines were withdrawn from Cape Haitian, after an impressive ceremony. The small detachment marched to the harbor side accompanied by the Garde band, which played "Semper Fidelis," "The Stars and Stripes Forever," "The Halls of Montezuma," and, finally, as the Marines embarked on USS Woodcock, "Auld Lang Syne." It was reported that there were tears in the eyes of many old Haitians as the Marines passed, and that many either took off their hats or saluted the American flag as it was carried by them.

At 5:30 in the afternoon on August 14, 1934, the



American flag was lowered for the last time at Brigade headquarters in Port-au-Prince, and the Haitian flag was raised in its place.

A company of the Haitian Garde faced a company of American Marines, with the flagpole between the two. As the American flag was slowly lowered, the Garde band played the American national anthem. A 21-gun national salute was fired by Fort National. The Haitian colors were then run up as the band played the Haitian national anthem. This was followed by a salute of 21 guns to Haiti. The Marines then marched in formation from the compound. They sailed at 9 o'clock the next morning on board USS Argonne and USS Bridge.

After more than 19 years, the American Occupation was formally ended.





XXV. Epilogue.

After the impressive ceremony of yesterday afternoon which took place in a perfect atmosphere of friendship, I am happy at the moment when the last marines are embarking to renew to you the assurance of my gratitude, that of the Government, and of the Haitian people for your generous and intelligent policy of the good neighbor which has effectively aided me in accomplishing national liberation and which ensures the continuation of the cordial relations now existing between our two countries.

- President Sténio Vincent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 15, 1934.

In keeping with Haitian political tradition, Sténio Vincent extended his term of office by unconstitutional means until 1941. In 1937 he very nearly had a war on his hands when large masses of Haitian peasants, starving and desperate, crossed the Dominican frontier seeking work. An estimated 10,000 were slaughtered by President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic in turning back this "invasion." Later, the two Presidents met and shook hands over the incident.

Street riots in Port-au-Prince in 1941 forced President Vincent to step down, and the Haitian National Assembly then elected Elie Lescot. He too tried to extend his term of office by extra-legal means, and in January, 1946, the Garde forced him out. A new National Assembly was convened and it elected Dumarsais Estimé, the first black President Haiti had had since the dismemberment of President Sam in 1915. Estimé presided over the adoption of a new Constitution,



which restored the pre-1917 ban on foreign ownership of real property in Haiti. Under his leadership the Garde, renamed Armie d'Haiti in 1949, became the recognized political arm of Haiti's blacks. President Estimé sponsored a world's fair in Port-au-Prince in 1949 which drew many visitors to the island, but unfortunately left the country with a staggering debt. Denied re-election by the National Assembly in 1950, Estimé called in black mobs to clear the Chambers. Terrible riots swept the capital, and finally the Armie d'Haiti removed the President and restored order.

Not unexpectedly, the next President of the Republic was the Commandant of the Armie d'Haiti, Colonel Paul Magloire. He insisted upon election by the people, however, and in a festive spirit the people, encouraged by free food and drink, responded and elected him with a plurality of some 150,000 out of 153,000 votes that were cast. The early years of his administration were probably as good as Haiti had ever had, but in 1956 a general strike, rumors of excessive graft and corruption, and increasingly gloomy economic forecasts resulted in his overthrow by the army. He escaped into exile in New York, and took with him the carefully hoarded cash reserves of the Haitian treasury - allegedly nearly \$7 million.

In September, 1957, a country physician, poet and philosopher was elected President of the Republic. This was Francois Duvalier, the beloved "Papa Doc" of the Haitian



peasant. In 1961 a new National Assembly hand picked by him was elected, and by virtue of that election he announced that he himself had been elected to a second term, even though his first term was not due to expire until 1963. In 1964 a plebiscite declared him "President for Life." The regime of terror he instituted thereafter was probably unmatched by any in Haiti's long and colorful history. When he died, in 1971, his son and heir succeeded him in the office of President of the Republic.

Thus, 36 years after the end of the American Occupation, Haiti was quite possibly the least democratic and the least developed country in the Western Hemisphere.





## XXVI. Conclusions.

It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below: but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth and to see the errors and wanderings and mists and tempests in the vale below.

- Lucretius.

"What is truth?" said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer.

- Francis Bacon.

Some years ago, while serving as Commanding Officer of a small U. S. Navy ship, I entered the harbor at Cape Haitian on Haiti's northern coast. There is an excitement attached to entering any strange port for the first time, and that excitement was heightened by a night of coastal piloting among Hispaniola's rocky and mountainous headlands. During much of the night the island was illuminated by a huge Caribbean moon. The raw smell of the land hung heavy in the air, and, recalling Seabrook's Magic Island, my ears almost strained for the sound of voodoo drums.

The sea detail for Cape Haitian is a short one, and the morning was perfect, with unlimited visibility, flat calm seas, and just the slightest onshore breeze. In spite of this, the approaches to the harbor were almost utterly devoid of the throngs of fishermen and coastal sailors who clutter the mariner's way in almost every port in the world. As our ship steamed past Fort Picolet, close aboard its



sheer stone walls, the only navigational aid marking the narrow ship channel was seen to be the broken mast of an old steamer, jutting ominously from the green water on our port hand. The buoys which had once marked the way to the one usable deep water berth had either sunk or been carried away in years of neglect.

Once moored, we were boarded by the Chief of Police and the only "official" American in Cape Haitian at the time - the director of a small USIA library in the center of the town. The American Consul had recently been ordered out of the country by President Duvalier. After the usual exchange of pleasantries and social invitations, warnings about the local water and venereal disease, and scheduling of tours, etc., there were a few free hours before paying the first calls on local Haitian officials. I decided to take advantage of that time and briefly explore the city. Everything worthwhile seeing seemed to be within easy walking distance of the ship.

It being then "siesta hour," the hordes of beggars and peddlers who greeted our arrival were asleep on the pier, stretched out on their drums and wood carvings. Only a few sinister-looking individuals at the pier head seemed alert behind expensive sunglasses. These were members of Dr. Duvalier's secret police - the ton ton macoute.

Cape Haitian, the erstwhile "Paris of the Antilles," had the appearance of a dying slum. The nearest approach to urban renewal that was visible was a lean-to shack built





against the one standing wall of a ruined stone building. The town's narrow, dirt streets were pot-holed to the extent that wheeled traffic, where possible, must have been extremely hazardous. Sanitation was deplorable. Garbage and worse littered the streets and sidewalks. The one observable sign of civic pride was the plethora of tiny Haitian flags and banners inscribed "Doc à Vie!" fluttering pathetically from the fronts of mean little houses. President Hyppolite's Iron Market presented scenes that wrenched the heart. The market women, the marchandes who carried their pitiable produce to town over miles of stony trails on swollen feet, lay sleeping amidst their stunted, half-spoiled vegetables and graying meats, oblivious to the flies, and the stench, and the noonday heat. A naked child nursed at his sleeping mother's breast. Older children, for the most part clad only in ragged shirts, threw stones at gaunt, starving dogs to keep them away from the market floor.

This view of Cape Haitian is perhaps not an altogether fair one. I later discovered that the green hills surrounding the town's center were dotted with many charming and modern homes. The newest, I was told, were built with American AID funds before the excesses of the Duvalier regime caused an end of most United States assistance programs in the Republic. There was no attempt to conceal the fact, and no obvious embarrassment, that most if not all of that assistance in Cape Haitian had gone to benefit government officials.



This was, and always had been, I gathered, the natural course of things in Haiti. The American Occupation was remote in time and all but forgotten. Most Haitians then living never knew it had ever occurred.

What, then, did it all mean? What special significance does the fact that the United States once occupied the Republic of Haiti for a period of almost twenty years have for Americans, or Haitians, today?

The roads, the bridges, the schools and the hospitals of the Occupation have, by and large, gone the way of the French sugar houses and plantations, devoured by drenching rains and encroaching wilderness. The institutions meant to be lasting did not take in the hearts of the people. The material benefits conveyed by the Americans proved fleeting, as ephemeral as the Haitian Governments in the years just prior to the intervention. One generation of Haitians grew up in conditions of relative order and stability, but in the long view even that seems to have had no lasting effect.

American capital investment in Haiti during and after the Occupation was not significantly greater than what it had been before, and what investment there was remained relatively unprofitable. The oft-repeated charge that "Wall Street" fomented the intervention in order to facilitate its "exploitation" of Haiti is myth, created almost entirely out of whole cloth by those antagonistic to the American economic system and propagated and believed by those un-



willing or unable to discover the truth. Likewise, the story that the Americans seized Haiti for the purpose of establishing military bases is belied by the fact that no such bases were ever built there, and by the written record in the files of the General Board which shows that senior American naval officers consistently rejected the idea of Haitian bases once Guantanamo was secured in the Spanish American War. The third of the "selfish" American reasons usually given for the intervention, defense of the Monroe Doctrine, has more merit than either of the other two, and was in fact cited by one of the architects of the intervention - Robert Lansing - in a 1921 letter to the McCormick Committee. It too, however, fails the test of logic, for in 1915 there was not the remotest threat of intervention in Haiti by any power other than the United States. The Monroe Doctrine was, in effect, a smoke screen to conceal the fact that there was no narrowly defined American national interest at stake in Haiti which required military intervention.

Why, then, did the United States intervene? There seems to be, from the record, little question but that the intervention was motivated by the broadest humanitarian desires to rescue the Haitian people from the seemingly hopeless anarchy into which they had fallen. Such an interpretation is perfectly in keeping with the known idealism and instincts of Woodrow Wilson.





In a democracy such as the American, humanitarian reasons are seldom, if ever, adequate to marshal public support of domestic policy, much less an active foreign one. The best that can ordinarily be hoped for in such circumstances is acquiescence, and when the policy bogs down and the going gets tough, acquiescence is not enough. The hard fact is that the "humanitarianism" of demos is something quite different from the humanitarianism of the individual. Intervention in Haiti on the humanitarian grounds that it was necessary to keep negroes from chopping up other negroes could not possibly have been supported democratically in the United States of 1915, nor for that matter of 1971. In that the intervention was a mistake, and not supported by any reasons of compelling national interest, the natural instincts of demos in this instance may be seen to have been superior to the more tender instincts of the President and his advisers. The failure of the intervention to accomplish anything worthwhile and lasting reinforces such a contention. Had there been no intervention it is at least possible a better Haitian society might have evolved after the chaos of 1915. A worse one than that actually surviving the intervention can scarcely be imagined.

The moral for future Presidents contemplating military interventions should be clear. Where such intervention is deemed necessary, its motivation and justification, openly and frankly acknowledged, should be furtherance of the



national interest. It needs no other.

Though the American intervention in Haiti failed utterly to satisfy its raison d'etre, from one limited aspect it was almost incredibly successful. There were never more than about 2,000 American Marines in Haiti, and during most of the Occupation there were less than half that many. Casualty figures show that in all the years of the Occupation, including the landing at Bizoton and the Caco War, only 7 Americans were killed in action and only 26 were wounded (3 of whom died from their wounds). It is instructive to consider how such a "cheap" operation in terms of American lives was carried out. It is also instructive to consider, in the light of later American experience in Vietnam, how it was not carried out.

It was not carried out by leveling every port city in the country by naval gunfire, though this was well within the capability of the naval forces deployed there. It was not carried out by destroying known or "suspected" Caco villages and positions by artillery fire or by burning, though this too was within the American capability. It was not, in general, with the notable exception of Washington's Bluejacket Battalion in the first days of the intervention, carried out by "green" troops, and never by men who could look forward to returning home before the job was done. It was not carried out with civilian direction or interference at the tactical level. It was not carried out in the face of infiltration of men and arms from areas beyond





the reach of American forces operating in Haiti. Finally, it was not carried out in conjunction with a massive relief and rehabilitation program designed to win "the hearts and minds" of the people. Because it was not, supplies and equipment, and particularly food, were kept out of the hands of the enemy, for the civilian population had none to give him or to be stolen by him. This research has uncovered no evidence to indicate that the American relief program in Haiti ever went much beyond the level of distributing garbage from American ships, and that was only a short term measure.

It may be argued that measures taken by the Americans in Haiti were callous and brutal, particularly in regard to the treatment afforded, or rather not afforded, the civilian population while the fighting continued. This argument does not hold up well under examination, however, and the fact is that the disorders were ended sooner and both American and Haitian lives were saved by not pouring food and relief into the country. As noted, many hungry blacks sold their weapons to the Americans, and hunger, as well as American force of arms, played a major role in disarming the country. The Haitian experience merely reaffirmed a truism known by military conquerors for ages - hungry people would rather eat than fight.

The military operation in Haiti was carried out by Marine and Naval officers and men of uncommon valor who knew their profession well. It is impossible to read the



accounts of the military action there and not feel both admiration and awe at the accomplishments of these men. Equally impressive are the leadership qualities these Americans displayed in welding together, in such a short time, an "effective and reliable constabulary" in the Gendarmerie. They made their Haitian recruits excellent fighting men also. One must wonder, in this time of relaxed discipline and growing egalitarianism in the American armed forces, whether such a thing is ever possible again. Certainly, there is little that is encouraging in the performance thus far of American-trained Vietnamese forces.

But, though the military operation in Haiti was a success, "the patient died." Why?

A lament often expressed by Occupation officials was that in Haiti the United States did not, as it had in the Dominican Republic and in the Philippines, establish a military government from the very start. In Haiti, perhaps because of domestic political considerations in the United States, it was decided to clothe the fact of military occupation in the legitimacy of a treaty which established shared responsibility and authority between American and Haitian officials. Just how legitimate the treaty was, given the circumstances in which it was negotiated, is at least debatable. What is scarcely debatable, however, is the hypocrisy attached to the American attitude thereafter. No man can ride a horse, but one must ride up front. There was never any question who was up front under the Occupation.



It seems quite probable that the immensity of the task undertaken by the Americans in Haiti was vastly underestimated. The country's finances could be straightened out in reasonable time, but the social and political problems had no short-term solution. Trying to establish stable, efficient, and democratic government in a country where 90 percent of the population was illiterate and poverty-stricken, was trying to square the circle.

A point often overlooked is the fact that the costs of the Occupation were not funded by the United States, with the very narrow exception of pay for the military personnel assigned there. General Russell estimated, in 1930, that the Occupation had cost the United States \$26 million to that time. In the final years of the American presence in Haiti the costs were not over \$500,000 a year. Thus, the very poor Haitian economy was called upon to finance virtually all the expense of the treaty services, in addition to the rapid retirement of the public debt. Under those circumstances, the wonder is that so much, and not so little, was done.

Finally, the Occupation in Haiti was confronted from the very start with the problem created by a strong political constituency in the United States which pretended to see in the Haitian intervention another example of the white man's oppression of the black man. This "cause" attracted a wide spectrum of support, and beginning particularly with the national elections in 1920, it became





a prime political issue. The Elite "out-politician" found in American public opinion the weapon needed to win back place and to force the Americans out. It was this, not a sudden and remarkable progress in "Haitianization," not reasonable expectation of political stability, and not faith in Haiti's ability to work things out on her own, that ended the Occupation in 1934.

To summarize: the decision to intervene in Haiti in 1915 was, from the point of view of the national interest, a bad decision; the decision to withdraw in 1934 was, from the same point of view, a good decision. It is an irony that the first decision, condemned as "brutal trampling on a helpless neighbor," was taken primarily for humanitarian reasons, and that the second, praised as a benevolent act restoring liberty and freedom to the Haitian people, was taken with the almost certain knowledge of portending disaster to the mass of the Haitian people.

Things are seldom what they seem.

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